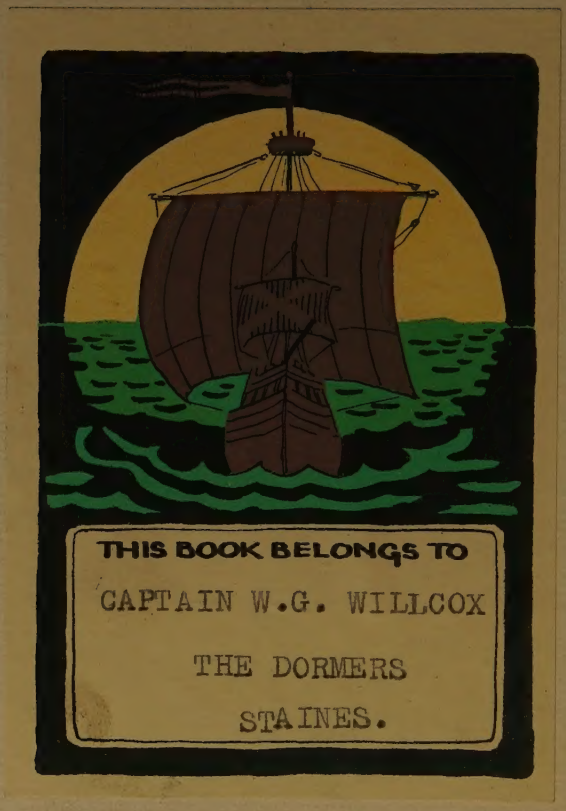
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RICHARD MIDDLETON'S LETTERS

RICHARD MIDDLETON'S LETTERS

TO

HENRY SAVAGE

edited with an introduction and comments by the recipient

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DEDICATION

YOUR NAME, FRANK HARRIS, SHOULD BE UNDER THE ABOVE HEADING. YOU HELPED MIDDLETON AND WERE OF THE FEW WHO FIRST RECOGNIZED HIS GENIUS.

AND IT MAY BE NOT IMPROPER TO ADD—AT THE RISK OF OFFENDING WRITERS WHOSE HEARTS ARE WITH SOCIAL SUCCESS—THAT I REMEMBER YOU AS A LOVER OF LITERATURE.

H.S.

THIS EDITION IS LIMITED TO
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INTRODUCTION

RICHARD MIDDLETON was born on the 28th of October, 1882, at Staines in Middlesex, and committed suicide by taking poison on the 1st of December, 1911. His brief life of 28 years is described in my *Richard Middleton: the Man and his Work*, published by Cecil Palmer of London and Small Maynard of America. His own (posthumously) published works comprise *Poems and Songs* in two volumes, *The Ghost Ship and other Stories*, *The Day before Yesterday*, and *Monologues*, which were issued by Fisher Unwin and Brentano's. They brought a fame too late to profit by it; a fame temporarily eclipsed by the Masefield spirit in poetry which followed them; but Middleton's work survives, and gradually he is being more widely accepted as one of the few true poets of the present century.

To the correspondence which follows I have added notes here and there where particular letters seemed to call for comment, and the present book, therefore, may be regarded as supplementary to the biography. It also further reveals the personality of the man. The biography aimed at truth, but I omitted much that is here made public, the forces that would rather romanticize men than see them as they are having been then too strong for me. If any nonsense of the "great-men-die-and-Judas-writes-the-biography" order is now brought up against me I can afford to be indifferent to it. As Middleton himself says (*Monologues*: p. 224), "I detest the cheese-paring enthusiasm that accepts the Olympian head and rejects the feet of human clay. . . . Moore burnt Byron's autobiography, Ruskin would not write a Life of Turner because of the nature of his relations with women, Stevenson abandoned a Life of Hazlitt because of the *Liber Amoris*. . . . In the face of such spectacles as these it is surely permissible to

pine for the blind generosity of the enthusiast, that incautious fullness of appreciation that lifts great men with their due complement of vices and follies on to a higher plane where the ordinary conventions of human conduct no longer apply."

Not that I need Middleton's approval to help to justify an action which will doubtless be condemned in some quarters. For all his own follies and vices as revealed in these pages, I, less enthusiastic in general as I may be with the years, still believe and maintain that he was of finer clay than the majority, that the spiritual struggle revealed partly in his poetry and at times in these letters, was that of a great man and matter for respectful wonder, and that, in short, he was distinctly a man to know. Those who condemn him will be unconsciously revealing themselves.

Finally, the letters, even if they were not those of a very considerable poet, are worthy of attention as a remarkable human document. Bourgeois morality will doubtless extract from them the moral that one shouldn't drink, gamble or womanize, but those of us who see life as a mystery, and the moral world as, say, Kant saw it, will no more know what moral to draw from them than we know what moral to draw from life itself. They *are* life itself, and the most, perhaps, that can be said of them is that, as with life, contact with them in some way widens our horizon, and makes for that respectful wonder of which I have spoken and for that fuller life which all of us, narrow-minded or broad-minded as we may be, really desire.

HENRY SAVAGE.

~~October 4~~ December 1. 1911. Midnight.

Goodbye! Harry.

I'm going adventuring again, and thanks to you I shall have some pleasant memories in my knapsack. As for the many bitter ones, perhaps they will not weigh so heavy now as they did before. "A broken and a contrite heart, oh Lord, thou shalt not despise."

Richard.

RICHARD MIDDLETON'S LETTERS

BROADFIELD,

EAST MOLESEY,

Sunday, July, 1906.

DEAR SAVAGE,

Yours was a pleasant letter and characteristic as a letter should be. I cannot write on this paper so I am afraid you are in for rather a rough time. Courage ! as someone says. I look back with enormous pleasure to our last morning drink. That was a deal better than pub-loafing, pleasant though the latter occupation is. But now my cry is Oh to drive through parks and forests when the dew is on the grass and the wine of the morning gurgles in my throat.

This is in no wise a hint. It is an invitation for some future date. I have been trying hard to write and have accomplished a certain amount of fasting. The fact is, mon Savage, I canna do it. But keep that dark from Richard Middleton. It is pleasant to fancy one can. I hope you fare better in your labours. I went and sold a book to-day for sundry useful bobs. I did it with a facetious pose, pointing out all the faults as virtues, but it was like a tooth out nevertheless—though I valued it not. Concerning holidays I will not speak. Only they are bound to be pleasant however spent. Their very negative qualities ensure that. No Lyons, no newspapers, no tubes, no stinks, no office. We shall see !

Did you see the review of Charlton's book in the *Chronicle* this (Tuesday) morning ? They all find out his fatal secret ;—his extraordinary youth. But fancy calling that magnificent creature " It." Well, there's a consolation. If he is young he's made an 'it. That is the jest. You see

that my flag is flying bonnily at present though i'fegs I know not why. I am trying to write a short story in a manner faintly reminiscent of Bart Kennedy, Esq. A Kennedy canna die but I think that one will. After that I propose writing a sensational serial story with a suicide in the middle and a murder at the end of each chapter.

My opening incident is great.

A man who has dined well and got home is hanging up his coat in the hall of his house when he treads on something gruesome and froglike.

He stoops down and picks up . . . his wife's hand! The lady has disappeared. A further instalment of this engrossing romance will appear in tomorrow's issue.

There—what do you think of it? Would you like to collaborate? You may do the comic relief if you like or the strange sad woman with leanings to unnatural vice. Or the poet millionaire with a villa in Park Lane and a dynamite factory (illicit) in Tooting. I only keep the outraged (repeatedly) heroine and the fatuous hero with a contempt for split infinitives. Ah, and the flaxen-haired child with her mother's voice and a monstrous faculty for composing extemporary prayers.

Eleven o'clock and nothing done. And presently bed and another day at the office. My watch is sympathetic though. It loses a little and so seeks to lessen my wasted time by three minutes. I wonder how old one is before one ceases to desire the moon. I wonder how long one must trudge along in the mud before one may fly straight through the blue and the stars to get it. I wonder why I was not born with a talent for wearing paper on my cuffs and a penholder behind my ear. I wonder why I call the people fools who have that talent.

I can hear you crying "fool" all the way from Raynes Park, and the thought makes me smile so all is well again. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters but friends and beer and tobacco, yes and scribbling. This evening I watered the lawn with a hose and got very wet and very happy. The smell of the wet grass recalled Richmond Park about which my mind waxes lyrical. All the best things are

unexpected. We know it, and that is why we go on making plans. To give the unexpected a chance. I smoke shag and cultivate the morbid like a tender young tree, though I suspect it of having devilish deep roots. To return to your letter which I pretend to myself I am answering, I am grateful for the cutting which was fresh to me.

Your logic in the matter of the high finance is admirable but unnecessary. I am always only too ready to make use of my friends' purses as though they were my own, perhaps I should say because they are my own. But if you will excuse a little (!) egoism, there is this to be considered. What effect does unchecked piracy have on the individual? —I mean the pirate not the victim. Is it likely that a man who does not control himself in money matters will be able to control himself in anything else? And the pirate has grown weary of the high seas and longs for the green fields of England. What then, Captain Henry? Why, the gallows, says I. No, it is really better on the whole to let me fight my little ridiculous battle on my own, seeing that the size of the battle cannot affect the magnitude of the victory, for though we all love to be pirates few of us find anything to admire in Bridewell. And if I have spent too much money yesterday it is right that I should go bare to-day. Here ends the *conscious* egoist, but let me add that if we make not a formal holiday together we have some jolly good days before us anyhow. Here's to Richmond Park and the simple life. I hate London this hot July.

Yours cheerfully,

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

I enclose the likeness of a minor poet for your screen!

. . . .

Middleton's distaste for his work as a clerk in the Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation led finally to his resignation in 1907 and the adventure of living wholly by his pen.

His mind "waxed lyrical" on Richmond Park in the following quatrain which I have by me:

Here the sun takes his ease,
  Here the stars shine;
These trees are my trees,
  This earth is mine!

Money was nearly always a sore subject between us, the occasion, even, of violent quarrels at times. In pressing it upon him when he was "short" I did not make sufficient allowance for his pride. Once, however—at the time he was "in love with a theatrical company," as he used to phrase it, and wanted to enjoy himself with the girls—he wrote clamouring for the means to continue along the path of primroses.

BROADFIELD,
EAST MOLESEY,
SURREY,
No Date. Probably 1906.

DEAR SAVAGE,

I feel unspeakably mean not to have answered your letters before, but like most idle people I am always fearfully busy!

You asked me (of all people) for a word, and I being human send you a set of verses, which must, in the order of things, explain my philosophy and leave yours untouched.

For after all, as you know well enough, the word that will help you can only come from yourself. So the futility of philosophers. They can only give you their own philosophy, they cannot help you to yours, and thus the problem of finding oneself becomes more complex as one reads.

As far as I can see it there are only two philosophies to build upon. The one consists in taking the way of least resistance, and this, the poor weak way, is mine. Optimism. Yours is the better way. Of course no one really wishes to find himself. But we want to see the way lying clearly ahead, so that our ideals may appear possible. And this is where other people's philosophies are so hurtful. They make us doubt, and that way lies madness. I shut my eyes to *my* doubts. You with your fighting mind should be able to overcome yours. Fling Nietzsche out of window and go forth by yourself and believe me.

Yrs. very sincerely,
RICHARD MIDDLETON.

I fear I have a small soul. I *love* writing my name.

. . . .

He raises here rather an interesting point. I have long since given up the study of philosophy. It ceased to interest me when I began to think for myself instead of merely juggling with the ideas and terminology of others. At the same time, it is difficult to believe that the thought of men whose names have come down the ages was of no value except to themselves.

No address or date. Probably 1906.

DEAR SAVAGE,

Thanks for the telegram which was a kindly thought but unnecessary. I recovered on Hungerford Bridge. Recovered? Nay that is in some sense a lie. Thou wilt find some bitterness latent in the following verses.

TO THE POOR IMPRISONED SOULS IN PHILISTIA.

I plucked a star from its socket,
A comet without a tail
That shone like a startled rocket
And sang like a nightingale,
And I put that star in my pocket
And went for a moonlight sail.

I sailed to a purple city
In a wonderful isle afar,
And sang an original ditty
Of the two or three things that are,
And they gave me—Alas! their pity,
They who would not see my star.

So I left the kingdom of flunkies,
And came to another land
Where the milk of the cocoanut drunk is
And the marriage laws are banned,
And I read my songs to the monkeys,
And they—they understand.

So you who have found it dreary,
The great commonsense bazaar,
Where the race is not for the weary
Having no motor-car;
Come forth from the beri-beri!
We shall hear you in Zanzibar.

These lines bring tears to my eyes so pregnant are they of a vanished melancholy. As a fact I never have read a song to the good folk in the city but I am quite sure they would pity me if I did. I fear the virtuous monkeys of the lyric must be the New Bohemians! This is lése-majesté (? accents) with a vengeance, but 'tis meant complimentary (adjective for adverb—charming archaism). The great joy of writing semi-demi-nonsensical poems is that you never know what you will drag in. Vide the pote.

Because the earth was lovely,
  Because the night was long,
I took whate'er life offered,
  Love, honour, right or wrong,
Because the earth was lovely,
  To make a perfect song.

I fancy we have all tried to do this at times. Felt that we could sacrifice everything to obtain perfect expression of one thing.

I made my song of roses
  Because I found them fair,
And stained them with her heart's-blood
  And tied them with her hair.
I made my song of roses——
  But love was weeping there.

As a matter of fact I can't. I haven't got the big thing to sacrifice. But my wish is 'Oh to love something desperately so that I could smash it and write great things about it.' This is quite immoral but natural enough I suppose. Still I looks to you, sir, to condemn it for me in nice stalwart English full of damns, Mister Savage, but don't damn those werses because I rather likes 'em man.

That is a sound rule when criticising a friend's verses. Go for him all you know but spare his work, and your children shall play with his in your common orchards when the furrows are on your brows and your white locks embroider your hats. At this point I think you will say

"Idiot" thrice in a loud voice. 'Tis your way and I love it.

By the way, I have an objection to make, an amendment to move, a what you will——. Why don't you fill your letters with your verses as I do mine? It makes me ashamed of my vanity of which I am ordinarily somewhat proud. Is it possible, man Savage, that you are not vain? I should be loath to believe you aught so inhuman and yet—Idiot says Savage says he. What time my sister plays the piano. I believe you care not greatly for music. I may be wrong in this but I have heard you singing Browning and—For my part I love it. Nay I write verses, e.g.

MOZART.

Over the mantelpiece hangs Mozart
  Brave in a frame of black and gold,
And sometimes I find it in my heart
  To dream of the thing I dreamt of old;
When being little who now am big,
  I thought that that calm face hanging there
And the ruff and the velvet coat and the wig
  Belonged to an ancestor once on a year.

Then I was little but now it seems,
  When I hear the music wrought of the King
Who told of the roses that grow in dreams
  And a little child there wandering,
A-gathering blossoms one by one
  To a heap in the folds of his pinafore,
That it were sweet ere the tale is done
  To be Mozart's little boy once more.

The child picking flowers is, I fear, a flagrant theft from Henderson's story The Captive, though it did not strike me till I had written it. I believe that I steal from everybody. The verses I enclose would not have been written but for Halford, though their spirit is exactly opposed to the spirit of Halford's poem. "There is no joy for me"

is a brutal idea and, I devoutly hope, untrue. "There is still the sun on the wall," says Sancho Panza and so say all of us. It is jolly to be young, and jolly—in a different way—to be old. The only mistake one can make is to die sooner than one can help it, for this is the crowning sin of ingratitude. Apart from this I thought his lines splendid. Penn visits me this afternoon and we explore the Royal Palace of Hampton Court, a thing which is worth doing in the right spirit of course——

I shall see you on Thursday if the roses behave themselves.

Your brither poet

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

4 in one letter is rather a large order, is it not? Go thou and do likewise.

. . . .

What strikes me with some surprise, reading the above letter again after all this time, is its youthfulness. It was written some five years before he died, since when the manner of his end has probably obscured my view of his life in general—one reason why my biography of him did not satisfy me. The general cast of his life was gloomy, I still believe, but no doubt he had more intense ecstasies than I at one time imagined.

As to the verses, they are of course to be read less as poetry than as being characteristic of him and an expression of high spirits; though a touch of originality cannot be denied them.

The New Bohemians was a tavern club to which we belonged. Its story is told fully in my *Richard Middleton: the Man and his Work*.

No address or date. Probably 1906.

DEAR SAVAGE—

Do you often write such long letters? Such damnably long letters? Delightful to read and redolent of pure Savage but devilish to answer. Even such adventitious aids as plain foolscap and large spaces between the words will hardly enable me to compete with your flowing pen. Next time I shall answer you on the back of a postcard, Sir. I dined with a select assemblage of Bohemians last night and had a jolly time. But, oh Savage! I was talkative, talkative, Savage. No longer the shy retreating Middleton of McQuilland's delightful romances, but a new Middleton, a base Middleton, a thing blatant. In the golden light of morn I can remember saying fifty silly things last night. An I said a wise one I recall it not. I hereby take a vow of silence. Henceforth I shall wander on my wild lone in solitary places like Kipling's cat. I shall seek out a desert island and cultivate my pure ego like a Savage. I'm not quite sure whether that should be a capital S or not. There came one running the other day to say that the great god Pure Ego was dead. Yet do I see him alive and kicking furiously in your epistle. And calling himself Gerard. Alack! your letter inspires me with a longing to tell you that I think Margaret is a very improper young person and Gerard no better than he should be. You see Margaret's subsequent attitude proves that she knew she was being naughty and that is sufficient. We must not permit the dainty enamel of sentiment to gloss over her sin, the only sin, the doing that which she inwardly believed to be wrong. You will find what I mean at the beginning of chapter 49. "It was woman's good opinion she wanted." That is the pregnant sentence. A girl of Margaret's type, no coward as you will agree, would not have cared a penny for the "understanding of the world," if she had felt quite certain of herself. I am aware that Reade expressly says that in her secret heart and conscience she was certain, but I think that in this case the puppet was greater than the

artist and that he was wrong. Casting aside such red herrings as "simple mediaeval mind" and "one of the most modest girls in Holland" you either have to accept my theory or to own that Margaret was a poor creature without a vestige of moral courage, one who would run away for fear of what the neighbours would say, although she knew herself to be in the right.

Now I like Margaret and I prefer to believe that she sacrificed her virtue, or what she believed to be her virtue, deliberately, because she thought Gerard was worth it. For Gerard's confounded selfishness in putting the poor girl into such a state, hot-blooded youth is, I fear, the only apology that can be made.

Man! man! I can keep this up no longer but why rouse the devil in me by saying that there is one point on which we agree? 'Tis a sure way to make me disputatious. Margaret is a darling. But tell me, didn't you want to break my neck when you were reading my criticisms? I am making an almost honest effort to read a book called Quentin Durward by one Walter Scott. But Lord! what bags of clothes his puppets are. He gives you their characteristics but none of the little human touches that would make them live. At least for me. A faint suggestion of a poor historical drama played by a tawdry fourth-rate touring company. But his notes and introduction are blooming interesting and reproach ignorance.

Yours

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

. . . .

Interesting, I venture to think, for its criticism of Scott at a time when that author was more widely accepted without question.

EAST MOLESEY.

No date. Probably 1906.

DEAR HARRY,—

Sorry to interrupt the novel but I must request you to write your contribution to T.M.P.'s book herewith enclosed and forward same to Henderson Esq. You plough a lonely furrow nowadays. The '05 Club knows you not. Many familiar faces have I seen but never yours. This is reassuring from the point of view of destiny but a sorry matter for me. I learn from W. H. that you believe me to be doing great works and therefore do not write. I am not. I am only making my usual blithers. Verses, Harry. Verses. My breakfast table yawns at me vacant and empty every morning. What lack I? Bacon? Eggs? Mushrooms? No! I lack a letter from my foretime faithful correspondent whose playful vagaries have enlivened so many painful railway journeys to my office.

I seek rooms in the great metropolis (London) daily. Not for long do I tarry in Kedar's tents. And Lo! as the time draws near for my departure I begin to feel regrets. I never loved a dear gazelle and in fact am not quite clear in my mind as to what that animal may be! I go in for prize competitions under an alias which is great fun but scarcely remunerative to date. Under the provisional name of Thyrsis I dance to please my beloved.

Please write and let me have your views on the Gymnosophists.

Don't be too modest in your contribution to Tommy's book.

Yrs

R.B.M.

7 Blackfriars Road.

No date. Probably 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

I have had a quiet day but the great work sticks unaccountably so I write to you. This day have I read Borrow's Lavengro for the second time, but this time I have derived no profit. I think I like reading the works of artists better than those of men of genius; that is why Browning is my favourite poet; that is why I love my Stevenson. One day I too shall be an artist. I wish no more.

I hear you called on me to-day, just after I had gone out to take a proof to the Academy (the proof of Miss Mathers, not the Pirate which I have not yet received), and I deduce from that that you have received a proof of your Machen fulmination. I am glad. I hope he will shrivel. I was sorry also that I could not have a sight of it in order to make suggestions. The mouse and the lion! you know. And we occasionally agree on small matters. Just enough to avoid our disagreements becoming habit.

Life is such a simple business to me that I sometimes feel afraid of it. I walk along the streets and I understand everything, the sky and the stores and the people on the pavements, and my very knowledge affects me with a horror of it all. I want miracles, bloody red miracles, not to support my faith but to upset it. I have sometimes thought that I had a certain belief in possibilities—but all my possibilities are possible and I am lost. If John the Baptist stood on my doorstep and preached the Simple Life I should watch his transference to a lunatic asylum unmoved. I want something to happen that has never happened before, something beyond my imagining, something new.

That is an old cry, I think, and it will survive me. I have been puzzling my wits today over my new form but I will not expound my thinkings yet. There may be something in it or there may not. If it works I shall do

5000 words and assault the monthly reviews. If it doesn't I shall write 1000 words and present the Academy with an account of my efforts. At all events it is an experiment worth trying.—Leaving my leeks and broccoli, how grow the sunflowers in your garden? Or are you still pondering on manners? I wonder whether one can overdo the education business. In some ways artistically it may be well for a man to cling to his ignorances; once lost they cannot be regained. Anyone can be wise by taking the trouble, but only a fool can be idiotic. This is my own, I think!

Friday morning. I prepare another article for the Academy, On the Art of Writing Letters, but I shall find it hard to be brilliant on so pedestrian a subject. In a few hours at most I shall be reading yours I expect. I get my Academy early here. I wrote an idiotic note addressed to the Editor demanding books last night. It can do no harm but speaking reminiscently I fancy I might have worded it better. "We are not damned for doing wrong but for not doing right," which ought to be branded on my forehead in letters an inch long for alas! I am a hanger-back.

Also, it seems, an egoist.

Yrs

RICHARD MIDDLETON,

Author of "Tripe and Other Essays."

. . . .

He is in London lodgings now and has broken away from the office. There is a touch of byronics in the third paragraph, but it is evident that he is beginning to see that life is not all a business of picking flowers.

The *Academy* was then owned and edited by Lord Alfred Douglas—upon whom I shall probably enlarge in my reminiscences.

7 Blackfriars Rd.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

I have too fat a head to write great and lasting works, so I sit down to write a letter. Thank you for your two lengthy and instructive epistles, from which I gather that you also have been kicking against the pricks. Query, in a better arranged world would it not be possible to kick without hurting oneself? To which you replies: "But it is good to hurt oneself." "Why?" says I impudently, whereon you laughs, and unrolls to me your 2573rd philosophy. This is life and I a realist. So is Tinker your dog, so there is no harm in that—but the dog will probably bark his soul out into the night before I do and what shall cover my nakedness when he is gone? Theory. May not men and women be naught but dogs (& bitches) successfully returned to their vomit? Pshaw, I grow Nonconformist Christian in my ugliness. "There is still the thorn on the rose" says you to me gloating, while I scratch my fingers trying to devise a thornless rose. Kitten thought. Only by learning to love thorns can my task be accomplished. Zounds I shall sing no more! My holiday at Chesham was quite spoilt by stupid physical illness, so it seems I am unfortunate in my excursions this year. I am back in town with a quenched spirit that asks why I should waste the years obeying the laws of a civilisation which I had no part in inventing. Oh to live on nuts and blackberries and little raw rabbits, and to spend the wet autumn nights kissing hairy women against their will under the hawthorn bushes. The rain would patter on her face while she fought and bit and scratched like a vivisected cat. Natheless I think I would kiss her. I yearn for the infinitely complex, you see, being honest human after my country trip. Man must be decadent, the honest man that is—or he wouldn't have devised that stale silly jape we call civilisation. Every brick in London is stained with the blood of a poet, and every moral under

the sun is wet with a poet's tears. The art of life is reduced to the futile photography of an inane type, and if God did not fog the plates and soil the developer life would be quite hell. As it is there are moments, moments of beauty perhaps, and it is the memory of them that makes us unhappy. And so like a successful puppy I terminate my game by reaching my own tail and giving it a good bite, and I had better shut up.

Yours

FIDO
(known by tradesmen as Richard Middleton).

. . . .

Here is evidence of the sex-starvation that often worried him. True, it may not be altogether a bad thing—it has at least produced some good poetry—and, on the other hand, one may be permitted to discount Blake's assurance that "desire gratified plants seeds of life and beauty": what may be called the sex-complacency of *les satisfaits* is surely not wholly desirable. What I conclude is that Middleton would have been better for a woman of the German ideal occasionally in his life.

Verses enclosed with the letter tell also of this inhibition and may be given here as being characteristic of him.

THE PIRATES

We had said farewell to our land and our race, and then
Had seen without fear or wonder new worlds unfold;
And our path through the seas was red with the blood of men
And our ship was laden with wine and women and gold.

And we wantoned in silks and satins and jewelled lace
Among the women, who, caught in our far-flung net,
Smiled ever the smile that we had put on their face,
Mocked ever the virtue that we had bade them forget.

First they were cold and—ladies of high degree—
Flaunting their pride on stiff contemptuous necks.
We had broken them one by one with the power of the sea,
And now they clung to us, laughing about the decks.

Not bad verses, their psychology, at any rate, is good; and I might add that the idea in them came to fruition in the really beautiful little lyric, *The Happy Cruise*, published in *Poems & Songs*.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.,

Tuesday, May 14th, '07.

DEAR HARRY,

Your letter was properly vague as to your future passings, so I purpose addressing these to Raynes Park. I also, go not to the Round Table for a month or so, though I met Charlton by chance on Saturday and we were amiable together. Machen is the man who has objected to Douglas, but I told them that you had no intention of bringing him up again, which I believe to be true, and that I didn't think Douglas would come again anyhow, which I believe to be a lie. But the more I see of the N.B's the more I am confident that it is the old members of it who count—G. Wilson, Penn, Henderson, Louis, Summers, David Wilson, Tommy Pope and the rest. What a gang of ripping chaps, every one of them ! Thinking of the Prince's Head meetings makes me sad, so many are combat horses now. The rest of us may be mighty fine clever fellows but we ain't clubable. We're not willing to make the little little sacrifices to the german silver gods of our neighbours that make for good evenings. We are damned individualists and ashamed of ourselves at that. I met David Wilson last night on Blackfriars Bridge, and he smiled on me beautifully and said he would come up as soon as possible. He has been doing a lot of night work it seems. Someone must do work. I have done four books for next week's Academy but I don't know whether they are going to use them as they haven't sent me any proofs. Douglas is sole editor now I hear, Tennant having bought the whole of the paper.

My sister is in Holland and I am feeling too ashamed of my attitude to the Society to seek out the N.B's so that I am somewhat lonely. Summers came to see me this morning though, and he seems to be bucking up and doing some work, which is a splendid thing if it lasts. Today is a grey day, and the face of the sky is wet with tears. I can picture Christian angels wandering about in the dank clouds with colds in their sexless noses, and no pocket hand-

kerchiefs to wipe them withal. The pavements shine with their drippings. Such a day makes me thank God for tobacco. I think my heaven would be a judicious combination of a Thursday night at the Prince's Head and a fine afternoon at the Oval (Hayward and Hayes batting) with a library in one corner and a playground full of children in another. One can derive a proper philosophic state of peacefulness from the watching of cricket matches, believe me, though I know you are a heretic in these matters. The perfect state of happiness in this life would be to be a professional cricketer attached to the Surrey Club, with a gift for writing minor verse. What a life! And people would buy your verses because you were a cricketer.

I see that I have forgotten the picture gallery and the string band in my heaven but these are details, oh and calm days and, better still, calm nights at sea, and woods of pines and Simpson's saddle of mutton. There are such a lot of good things in life, though we do not always attain to the king-like happiness.

(At this point I broke off and went to eat two Cambridge sausages, a portion of household bread and a pat of butter, at one of the cafe's of Messrs. Lyons.)

My proofs have come, all four of them, so that I presume they will be in this week's Academy. It will puzzle your critical acumen to pick them out of that good and improving periodical, though I would back my sister to do it every time. There's one for you, but I recall that you despise critics and have no wish to be one yourself, so that I fear my challenge lacks point. With my proofs there came a letter from one Henderson, a very admirable cove, proposing three months country retirement at Sonning on Thames or some sich spot, as he gives up his flat on June 1st.

This man H. who is the devil of a fine schemer, purposes taking a month's holiday in this rural retirement and a season ticket for the other two months. Two bedrooms, one for him and one for me, he proposes, and a sitting-room for us both. Plenty of exercise. Plenty of work. Oh it is the attractive scheme, but it would mean selling up the

home, and I am loath to do that, man Savage. I would do my reviewing as well at Sonning as in London if my good fortune continues, but I will see the man Henderson tomorrow night (being Wednesday) and we will talk it over. An attractive scheme but impracticable I'm thinking. By the way, does that man Furniss who is one of your low pals, go in for reviewing books in any of his base papers as I'm greedy and would like some more? I fancy not though. It is nice clean work and the critical attitude is good for my riotously uncultivated mind.

And now that I've done prating of myself, how is it with you Man Savage? Are you well? are you married? are you happy? Your letter was fine on the literature an' a' that, but it struck me that you were feeling mildly depressed when you wrote it; maybe you had the croodles, though I'm doubting you winna ken what they are. But what is man but a poor wee whiterick snozzling away like a gopher in a hole. These beautiful words are not my own; I stole them out of a recent work of fiction with some others which I shall spare you. Oh but the reviewing is great fun and the man Douglas is a peach with a stone in to let me do it. I never thought life could be so unredeemedly good as it has been for this last six weeks, and after the hell of the office—

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden numbers
O sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplext?
O punishment!

Is this not a letter? It's quarter to one and I shut up.

Yours

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

Saturday.

The enclosed letter I forgot to post when written. I went to the N.B.'s after all and squabbled with Charlton. I'm afraid I shall have to give it a rest. You will have seen the Academy. I have got some more books to do and I

meditate an article. I have been watching cricket matches which is a very happy way of passing an afternoon and restful to the mind. This afternoon I am virtuous and work. We ought, both of us, to remember that Randall is younger than any of us and should be granted a boy's privileges, but it's damned hard sometimes. I lost my temper on Thursday and ended by calling him a liar and getting drunk ; a fine end to my good resolutions. But a day at the Oval yesterday restored me to my senses so that there is something in county cricket after all, you will perceive. I should like to see you next week. If Tom is back you might come up ; if not, I will come down. Write and let me know.

Thanks for the supplement

Yours

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

. .

Machen is of course Arthur Machen, whose star is on the wane with collectors in these days but will, I think, gleam brightly again in due time. I can't see *The Hill of Dreams* and *The Secret Glory* passing to oblivion. He must have been in a " moral " mood when he objected to my taking Douglas to the new Bohemians Club. It was not long afterwards that he was working for him on the *Academy*—parts of *The Secret Glory* appeared in that periodical, by the way—until ousted by the arrival of the redoubtable T. W. H. Crosland. He and Middleton never quite hit it, although, after the latter's death, Machen wrote the fine appreciation of his work which prefaces *The Ghost Ship*.

The reference to Harold Furniss brings a smile. He was editor of the *Police Budget* and something to do with the Caxton Press. An enormous man—he weighed over 25 stone—he used to take exactly five minutes' nap each afternoon on a small kitchen chair, and with a small servant maid, very like Dick Swiveller's Marchioness, near at hand to push him back in case he swayed forward. He could sleep and wake at will. His business was crime, his one passion in life—I believe—carnations.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HENRY,

Since Thursday last I have seen no New Bohemian nor member of the G.F.N. [Gallery-firstnighters' Club] and I am fallen into a tranquil way of living, reading, thinking and trying to write, which is very pleasant and profitable for my soul. Nor have I been a prey to discontent and hence you have not seen me, though I bear your invitation in mind and will come to you the first unseemly day. I, too, will likely not go to the N.B.'s tomorrow for it seems a pity to break the continuity of a life so satisfactory, though sooth to say the words flow from my pen but stubbornly these days. Douglas (who smiled upon me from afar off in the Strand this night) sent me four more books to review and I have had the proof of the others. This is joyous news for me (and I know for you too) and if they paid more I should see a living in sight. But it will come. Your " singeth a quiet tune " quotation that vexed our memories the Tuesday before last is from the Ancient Mariner. From which discovery you will see that I have been keeping company with the great ones. Dowson is (not was) a poet. I expect you discovered that years ago, but in these things I am but timid. Also, Defoe's style in big chunks is admirably monotonous and Tennyson's Duke of Wellington thing is too good to be a real ode. So is Milton's The morning of C.N. I have been re-reading De Profundis and I still think that he made of humility a last rampart to protect his arrogance, but I shall say no more about that. So much for the tired critic.

I have read and reviewed three indifferent novels since I saw you last and I go to do a charming Irish book by one Synge, title The Aran Isles (not, thank heavens, a novel).

Yours with a quiet tune

Richard Middleton

with a churchwarden in his mouth.

. . . .

There have been less acute criticisms of *De Profundis*. And he never had an opportunity of reading the Unpublished Parts of that work!

He wrote a glowing review of *The Aran Isles*, which had much to do with hastening Synge's fame. He also helped to bring D. H. Lawrence's first novel, *The White Peacock*, into prominence; and in this same matter of reviewing I recall Frank Harris's protest when he gave a whole page in *Vanity Fair* to De Vere Stacpoole's *The Blue Lagoon*. "What the devil do you mean by it?" demanded Harris, who, however, on reading the novel later, said, "Well, perhaps you were right, but it seems to me a very milk-and-watery *Paul et Virginie*."

7 Blackfriars Rd.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HENRY,

The landlord demands money to pay his life insurance withal. He wrote me a civil note and had a civil interview with me. I bear him no malice, I am a child in these matters (*vide* Bleak House !). I hope to do some work for Vanity Fair which Jepson edits for the moment. They pay rottenly however. I have had a proof of Pirates—I hope you have had yours. I had 2 books sent me so presumably my letter has worked the oracle. Yesterday I saw Louis, Garland, Jepson and T. M. Pope. Jepson was very editorial and alarmed me who had prepared some diverting quips to lighten his darkness. Well—he shall never have them now. Will you be at the N.B.'s on Thursday. I think I shall have to go as they want to bring out some sort of book. Come up and help me to oppose it—it isn't good enough. They change taverns shortly, I believe. I go to my aunt's for a fortnight on Saturday next. She has prepared a writing table for me. I read Shakespeare who was a clever chap.

Yrs for " Letters "

Richard.

7 Blackfriars Rd.,
Over against Bethlem Hospital,
June 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

I hope my failure to answer your letter has not troubled you, but God only knows how difficult it is for me to bring myself to do anything at present. My mind is permanently asleep and my body longs to follow suit. Hunger, the hope of fame, the love of my family and my friends—nothing can make me think or wish to think about anything. I really think the spark—if there ever was a spark—is extinguished and my mind is a dark place of uneasy slumbers, for this were a veritable isle of lotus eaters if I were only happy with it. But this I can not. I, that is, some miserable fragment of me somewhere, it may be conscience or memory, am worried because I am not doing things, but there it ends. I am not even writing bad verses now and I thought that happy habit would be mine to the grave. Only a continual disquiet and darkness and silence, and I am miserable in a world where even a scavenger collects dung. Between the very sentences of this letter my mind wanders into blanks, and my head drops on my shoulders though I have slept for three days and nights. My keenest wonder, which is so mild as to be almost unconscious, is as to whether I shall ever wake up again. Of course I can eat and drink and talk rot to my neighbour and cut my fingernails, but my mortal life seems over and done with, unless this letter means anything. I am sweating with the effort to express myself and it used to be so easy. Reading is no good. I mouth the words and follow the lines with my eyes and turn over the pages till the book is finished, but it might never have been written for me.

I have paused in my letter to copy out the poem for you, to pay the postage, as the offices are shut and I have no stamps. And lo! I feel better! I suppose even this is sufficient to relieve a mental constipation. I suppose I

really want the purge of a great misfortune instead of the brown bread pills of contemptible worries. Stevenson's "A piercing pain, a killing sin" are what I want and I have neither.

But surely a day will come when I shall awake and do something or other, I care not what. So far I have only tried to spoil God's part of one man and the foam of his tortures is bitter on my lips. It is time I wrote my De Profundis for I have utterly wasted twenty four years. It seemed a good game at first, this, it was so easy. But now that I have only a little brown earth for my crimson roses and a few sour ashes for my songs I am sorry. Come and see me some day old man. It will do me good. Bring Henley's Anthology with you and we shall read us poems. I have just borrowed a Bible.

Yrs

R.M.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.,

June 5th, 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

Unexpected demands on my finances brought about the somewhat urgent and unconventional communicacion which I sent you last, as I found myself unable to go to the country unaided. Thanks very much. I had a fine time at Chesham and my room is adorned with wild flowers today to make pleasant dreams of the country. One of these days I must surely live there, but I fear the devil in me would always desire a season ticket to London. It is too strong for me (in several ways !) this hell of a place, but like the hell of Zangwill's aesthete it has some damned fine moments. I have just given birth to a sonnet—no, a rondeau, and written to my sister, so that I am feeling happy. I shall go to Wilson's on Saturday. Will you? Are you going to the N.B.'s tomorrow? I think I shall and shall be glad if you will call at Blackfriars if you are up in town. Wilson was there last week, talking to Charlton in a fatherly way that was good to hear and visibly impressed that young man. I can't write legibly for toffee, nay not for pink toffee today, but my heart is good. You will have to take this letter as read I'm afraid. My reviews in the next Academy are rotten I'm afraid but I have done a good one for the subsequent number. How is it with you, oh young man?

Yrs

Richard.

. . . .

The Wilson referred to is George Francis Wilson, whose *The Amarant* is a good poem, and who has written some of the best cricket verse that I know.

Blackfriars.

June 1907.

L'Oiseau Mort. Greuze.

For H.S.

Her bird is dead, it may not sing again
Nor love again, for Death the master thief
Has taken it, and like an autumn leaf
Joyless it lies and smitten with soft rain.
Her melting fingers tremulous with pain
Touch the poor dead, but all the pretty grief
And all the young heart's innocent belief
In a kind God, may ask its song in vain—
Her bird is dead.

And yet, it may be, in some quiet place
When dreamy birds salute a dreamy day,
She, with the patient sorrow in her face,
May hear it capture heaven with the grace
Of its old song, and in the glad old way
Her heart may stir to it ere dawn can say,
Her bird is dead.

. . . .

By no means in his best manner, but worth preserving, I think.

CANNON MILL COTTAGE,

CHESHAM,

BUCKS.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

I came down here yesterday, so our purposed expedition fell through. I have had the Academy and I find your Machen letter very good. There is some fine and not too conscious style in it in places. I should think Machen would be annoyed, which is good for him you say. I have neuralgia this last two days, which is perhaps good for me ——. I did not go to the N.B.'s after all; I went home instead and stopped the night. Did you see our Charlton and A. C. Benson in yesterday's Tribune? He is a lucky young man—he will make a lot of money! I saw Jepson again at the Vanity Fair offices and he was very decent. He desires of my verses for that journal and commissions another article. It seems I had wronged him. My mind is a blank. I have nothing to say and much to do. That is my new 1907 pattern motto. We shall meet again at Phillipi but now we must get on with our work.

Yrs

RICHARD M.

• • • •

Edgar Jepson was then editing *Vanity Fair*—just before it became the joyously anarchic journal it was under Frank Harris.

Randal Charlton was the journalist friend who went with me to Brussels when news of Middleton's death arrived. He had said in the *Tribune* that A. C. Benson wrote his essays with a yard-stick—which was true enough.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

You must have condemned me as the worst of correspondents but I have a good excuse or rather two. I have been working and I have been gazing on the faces of my friends. Tonight, however, I can't work so very properly I write letters. Your letter, I felt, was on a plane of life above mine at present, and I found my brow wrinkling over the sunshine in it, for I am become a mercenary dog. I have just been adding up and in the last month (calendar) I have made £9 8/– with my pen! Is it not amazing? Oh my Scotch ancestors I thank you for that thrill. The standard of poetry in Vanity Fair continues to be very high and there are without doubt wheels in my head and hair, too much hair, outside it. And you, you oh philosopher, ask why children grow up. This is abhorrent brutish pessimism on your part and demands rebuke. I have been asking myself more healthily why we start by being young. If we ended by being children, everybody would believe in God; but the present deterioration seems so wanton. It is as if every man started life with a little shining fish like a jewel on his breast, and spent three quarters of his existence hating the inevitable stink of the finny denizens of the deep if kept too long out of water. This is a fine figure of speech. Rake, whose books I saw t'other day, has an autograph copy of one of Swinburne's books presented by that poet to Oscar Wilde. I gazed upon it with awe and thought of you. There is a wonderfully profane number of the German paper Lustige Blatter aimed at the sexual habits of their officers. If you see it, buy it, for the pictures though dirty are very funny. How the police and the censor have damaged art in England! It is impossible to speak of sodomy with any detail in polite society nowadays. I fear you will find the old country greatly changed when you return. There is a vague unrest in certain quarters with regard to

the coaxing seriousness of the N.B.'s and McQuilland and I dined with Penn last Thursday instead of going to the club. I foresee alarums and excursions anon. Meanwhile I confess that I am happy without quite knowing what I have done to earn that feeling. It would be frightful to become used to one's own little ways, wouldn't it? And yet I don't know. I don't think either my sins or my asceticisms move me as much as they used to. Perhaps one morning there will come one running to say that Peter Pan is dead, and that Richard Middleton has just been born, aged twenty five. I shall hear the news with the chaste resignation of an Ophelia who has been rescued from the deep by a super-gallant policeman. I look towards yer.

Yrs

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

11 Alexandra Court,
Maida Vale, W.
16*th August*, 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

It was very nice of you to take so much trouble to try and find me today. I had to go to the city and interview swine. I don't know what will happen. My father's firm shuts up for good in a fortnight after going for about 100 years. My great-grandfather founded it. Sic. This day will be published a new volume entitled The Fall of the House of Middleton. But we shall always be true to our Tory traditions. My father starts again as a consulting engineer and I expect he will do alright after a bit but for a time there will possibly be a pinch and they talk of letting the flat. I am trying to make an effort to buck up a bit and I shall try to send some reviews to the Academy this week. You see they have put my scurrilous Greening review in after all, which gives me joy. But Lord, moonbeam and starbeam and song! I shall come down to Raynes Park on Monday to see you, if you do not write to me at above address before. I stop here till then. I am bucking up a lot

Yrs
R.B.M.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

DEAR HARRY, *No date.* 1907.

Thank you for your letter though I was sorry it left you not too cheerful. First I write business. Please send me five shillings to take me on till I get my cheque. I don't feel like selling books now, which is, perhaps, a healthy sign. End of business. I am writing reviews furiously with the throng and I believe I improve at that curious art, or perhaps by the favour of God the books I am tackling provide greater opportunities to the youthful critic. I believe also that I am on the eve of giving birth to a NOVEL, which will combine all the virtues of my previous attempts and avoid their failings or so I 'opes. In fact I am full of healthy aspirations and I am going to do *something*. Poetry I am out of mind for at present. Prose is the thing with a capital P. I stop here till Saturday when I go to spend the week end at Maida Vale. It is quiet there and I can work and have society. No more gin crawls at present, I have tasted that apple and spat out the pieces for ever I hope, not being a dog, I shall not return to my vomit. I was glad to hear that you had made it up with Tom. I don't think a man can do his work unless his mind is quiet. At least, that is my experience. And yet a man ought to suffer most things at one time or another. I look up and see enormous gaps in my bookshelves. Where are the roses of yesteryear? But I suppose I am the better for it somewhere. My rules for the future are

Not too much to eat	Lots of family society
Nothing (alcoholic) to drink	Moderate exercise
Lots of work	An 'appy 'eart
	Early rising

and I hope I can add

The society of Savage.

I should like to cut down my smoking but I can't.

Yrs sincerely

Roosevelt Middleton.
author of The Long Streets.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. 1907.

DEAR H. SAVAGE,

Thanks for your letter which was by ordinar' witty. I have just finished a short story and I believe I shall write well enough presently now that I have escaped the husks. I feel jollier and happier than I have for a long time. I judge you had a good time in Paris with your spiritual sins and your black statues you immoral rogue ! I hope to be able to sin spiritually for a guinea a thousand presently when the effects of the drink have passed away and time has restored unto me my ideas.

Nowadays I make phrases, viz :—I have exchanged the brilliant make-belief of the amateur for the stolid insincerity of the professional.—The smuts of London swimming before the country-folk are the black spots in the eyes of the intemperate.—It is a wise man who can continue to find romance in drink after he has seen our midnight streets made foul with the vomit of drunkards.—Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we shall be Fabians.—

I cannot keep this up. I have seen a babe in fits of laughter at the strange shapes of the lawnmowers outside my gate and I have wondered what may be the right order in which to eat the constituent parts of a mixed grill, recognizing the wisdom of children in leaving the currants in a pudding for the end of a banquet.

The Round Table at six o'clock tomorrow.

Yours

Richard Middleton.

BRIARWOOD, LOWER BOURNE,

FARNHAM, SURREY.

No date. 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

I have been dreaming very pleasantly here for a week (I enclose a photograph of the place) and I purpose riding up on my bicycle on Monday. If I arrive at Raynes Park, very hot and weary at about five o'clock in the afternoon perhaps you will give me a drink? I'm an English gentleman but I won't be bathed. Short of this I am eager to oblige my friends. I have a scheme of sorts—for the future, at least my future. I will tell you on Monday.

Yrs

RICHARD.

. . . .

The allusion here is to the youngster in Barrie's *Peter Pan* who objected to being "bathed." So far as I remember, I had been sententiously warning him against his manner of life at that time—drinking and doing no work.

CANNON MILL COTTAGE,
CHESHAM, BUCKS.
No date. 1907.

DEAR HENRY,

I have started writing to you several times from my rural quietnesses but it has come to nothing. Thank you very much for your letters and quotations. The latter from Ransome's book have caused much excitement down here, especially among my female relatives who were arrided almost to madness by the reference to my magnificent manner. It seems they had not noticed it, until it was pointed out to them. The messieurs with me on that infamous occasion were Summers, Ellis and Prior and I was very drunk. Ransome lies about the colour of mine eyes damn him. Blue, forsooth, as if my name was Albert. Also he is a snob and a prig methinks, and that is not the way friendships are made. Let us forget him. "The Reader," the literary Tit Bits run by the Chronicle folk repeats the error of another paper and ascribes Henley's thing "On the Road to Kew" to James Thomson, which seems to me curiously wide of the mark. I must not swear at that paper however for they quoted my views on Jacobs from the Academy under the heading of "A Tray of Diamonds." Beautiful! Surely a man quoted by the Reader has some legitimate claims to fame. I was, like you, it seems, laid up for a few days with a severe chill. But now I am recovered and the little larks do play and sing as of yore. I hope by now you have learnt the wisdom of piping a merry tune and not a wise one. Wisdom, the property of the few, is the limitation of the many, and we have abolished property, you and I. Again, no decent young man wishes his neighbour to be done good to—he only wishes to do good to his neighbour, for there is only room for one young man in the world. I can go on like that for ever. It *is* easy. I return to town on Monday next.

Yrs

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

I altered P*un*chas on the proof, blast their eyes. But the pun was too much for them it seems.

. . . .

The allusion is to Ransome's book *Bohemia in London*, in which appears a word-sketch of Middleton in conversation with friends at the old Cafe de l'Europe in Leicester Square.

No date. Probably '07.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letter was something cryptic but natheless full of wise half-meanings for the inquiring mind. Your definition of Swift's style will apply admirably to your own. Always, in spite of most conservative convictions to the contrary, I feel that you mean something!

Tonight I hear Jepson lecture at the Queen's Square Club. I shall be working at V.F. [*Vanity Fair*] tomorrow and Thursday this week because of a certain supplement. Louis and Penn have arranged to dine at Roche's downstairs, on Thursday at 7.30 p.m. I shall come then or as soon as possible. Nous verrons. Today I have accomplished some small things, though not enough to make any cackling about. I sometimes find myself despising a man with unwavering patience enough to write an epic. There is only one mood on whose recurring periods one can safely rely and that is the bestial. I suppose one could get good work even out of that if faith were not lacking. I envy you your strength of mind in keeping your journal intime private. If I wrote such a thing I should always be dragging it out for the admiration of my fellow-voyagers. How do you do it? They did not send me any proof of my Academy article and there were, therefore, three most vile misprints in it. But I am glad they used it because, though I had done the thing but poorly, I meant it with a damn. Louis is very keen on the three of us bringing out a book of verse together and calling it "The Three Companions." What think you? Truly, it would be mixed fare.

I end abruptly. Yrs RICHARD.

. . . .

"Louis" was Louis J. McQuilland, the critic, and in his day as fluent and witty a talker as I have ever heard. The wit of both men could be extremely malicious, and they often spat hate at each other. "An appetite surrounded by whiskers," said McQuilland once at Middleton.

Collectors need not trouble to seek for "The Three Companions." It came to nothing.

D

VANITY FAIR,
33 STRAND, W.C.,
Dec. 18*th*, 1907.

DEAR HARRY,

Thank you for your letter. I note the hour. These presents are to give you notice that tomorrow night being Punch night I purpose going to the New Bohemians. I am doing this because I do not anticipate any serious discourse or other trouble on a punch night. Louis, I think, is mildly indignant at the suggestion, and certainly will not go himself. If you are coming up, telephone to Vanity Fair, as per tel address above, and we can foregather somewhere before going along. I hope you will come. I have been doing a certain amount of work.

Yrs

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. 1908.

DEAR HENRY,

The other side of the room two joss-sticks extend their fragrance towards the fair maiden of the Dead Bird, who searches for Greuze in the dimmest regions of hell, crying plaintively for her lost anatomy. These be my last cynical offerings before the shrine of youth, and a goddess of such tender years can hardly distinguish joss-sticks from incense I hope, any more than a sex-mad person who has read Havelock Ellis can distinguish between God and the Devil. And now I have told you all I know about little "Miss Hook of Holland."

There comes to me tonight, as a section of a melancholy that includes the universe, the thought that I have never acknowledged that merry flight of six letters which happened once on a day, and seeking to extinguish the last star, I cast my inner puritanical eye over the days that have passed since that pleasant portent. I see much drinking, several visits to musical comedy of the baser sort, some querulising on God and a little, bad, incomplete work. So you see I have been too busy to write. Who was the gentleman in Dante's Quartier Latin hell who spent his time eating himself? That is what I am trying to do but I am too proud to nibble my fingers and too fat to reach my toes, so there is still a whole Richard Middleton in the Blackfriars Rd. I am Sentimental Tommy with about half the brains, and the problem of shielding my velvet coat from the mud of civilisation wearies me. Barrie strikes me as being a man who is great in a very aggravating way. He writes about souls with far greater knowledge but in the same finnicking manner as Le Gallienne writes about petticoats. But the two Tommy books seem to me to be truer than the Egoist, and his type is more subtle than Meredith.

I am a boy and moreover I am a bad boy but these morbid classification affect my actions not a jot. I have

had, like you, I suppose, a circular about a dinner to Louis, and all my pride is up in arms at the spectacle of the older members "arrogating to themselves" the credit pertaining to our common friendship, or if Louis will have it so, acquaintanceship. Henderson and Pope are the men who think Louis is a nuisance in his cups and they are on the committee and they, I have no doubt, will make full-mouthed speeches of hypocritical admiration for a man whose gods they despise. So, while acknowledging Solomon's dictum that a bad boy ought to be spanked, I hereby record my intention of being absent from that dinner both in body and spirit. If I am to bear the stripes of a boy, I shall at least gratify myself with a boy's petulancies.

Well, the joss-sticks have burnt out, and with the most admirable intentions I have expressed my ego in but a gloomy letter, nor is loveless Winifred perceptibly the better for the fragrance of my burnt-offering. Perhaps there will be a thunder-storm in heaven ere long and the sleepy gods will fall a-quaking in their comfortable chairs, while she of the fat cheeks and the short upper lip acknowledges that I can play with a proper earnestness. I go to tea and supper at a child's house next Thursday, and I take her to the theatre next Saturday night, but I fear in good truth that she is too old for me! But I thought the Bohemians were children once and now they weary me with their problems when I want to play. And I am beginning to think that drink is a grown-up thing and vice and religion.

Do you mind cashing me the enclosed and sending me a Postal Order. I would come down and see you but I fear lest my mood may be poisonous.

Yours for the nursery

RICHARD MIDDLETON.
aged seven.

. . . .

"Little Miss Hook of Holland" was a musical comedy we saw together many, many times.

REDHILL.

Au clair de la lune. Saturday.

No date but probably early Spring '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I am here with a knapsack on my shoulder, my face turned towards the dreamy south, my blithe feet leaping towards the sea.

How it happened I do not know. Last night I privily packed my bag, breathed a benison on my sleeping landlord and departed from London at 2.15 (the morning) per tram. Afterwards I walked seventeen miles without a stop as sundry blisters on my feet do testify and God favoured me with his rain the whole while. The dawn was even as the wringing of a soaked sponge and the water rose through my boots which are defective after the manner of the springs at Tilford Mill which you do not know. Good morning Sir ! said a civil fellow going to his labours, but already I found myself loathing the police for was I not a tramp ? This morning therefore I came to the place where I now am and the sun shone and dried up the ground. And I fell asleep on the common till a shower awakened me and this happened three times. But the third shower was a waterspout marvellous to behold, but damnable to experience, for though I sheltered in the tulgey, the rain beat through the branches and through my mackintosh and tapped upon the flesh of my body, and my spirit howled within like a moonstruck dog. Now the sun shines again and presently I shall continue my journey through the dark places of the night. When I shall come to Brighton which should be at Monday's dawn it would be so good to see your face. Wherefore the days Monday and Tuesday to wit I shall wait at the end of the West Pier from eleven o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. If you come not on either of these days I shall know that your feet are fettered. Why not take a week's holiday, pack a knapsack and come too ? I think of walking along the south coast to Devonshire, keeping in touch with the sea

as far as possible. But of course I am under the thumb of the gods.

If you can't turn up at Brighton, I shall try and send you news of me again presently. It may be a big adventure.

Yours

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

. . . .

The landlord at Blackfriars had been importunate, and it was Middleton's idea that if one went forth in search of "the unexpected" something of an advantageous nature was bound to happen. The sequel to the adventure is expressed in the letter which follows.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

DEAR H,

The great scheme failed somehow. I starved for four days and walked back from Brighton on my uppers. I had some adventures however. Have you ever lived for four days on £0 0 0? It can be done. I shall tell you about these things when I see you. At present I am a wreck stopping with my people for a day or two. They think I have been on an ordinary walking tour and rather overdone it. I have seen dawns and sunsets—I really have. And tramps and policemen and servants halls. I borrowed a shilling from a policeman at Norbury to help me back to town. I was half arrested at Brighton for being homeless and destitute. Oh Great Larks for short stories and things. Then there was the boy but of course you know nothing about him. I have seen a bed bug crawling up the gates of heaven and a louse in thy courts, O Jerusalem!

Yrs insanely,

Richard Middleton.

The boy referred to provided him with material for a good short story, *The Brighton Road*, published in *The Ghost Ship*.

VANITY FAIR,

March 31*st*, 1908.

DEAR HARRY,

I depart to Hastings by the 3.35 train, if you see your way to come down tomorrow morning it would be a very good idea, and we would be in time for the show in the afternoon.

I am putting up at the Royal Oak, of course.

Yours,

RICHARD
in a hurry.

. . . .

I publish the above note because it marks the beginning of important happenings in his life. He had gone to a private performance at Drury Lane Theatre by a juvenile theatrical company about to go out on tour. What happened subsequently will be seen largely in the letters which follow.

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,

HASTINGS.

No date. Probably April 1, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I have your telegram, which I regretfully confirm. But you are missing something that neither women nor business (forgive the tautology) can be allowed to make you miss. It is better than Little Miss Hook, charming though that lady was. So you must come down tomorrow morning, see the matinee and either return to women and business tomorrow night, or preferably return by that damnably early train of mine on Friday morning. Now Sir! If love, fame, future and your reputation as a business man are at stake, stake them and come. There are not so many of these celestial things that you can afford to miss one even for business—and women. I have spoken.

Yrs in Arcadia,

RICHARD.

PIER HOTEL,

SUSSEX BY THE SEA.

No date. Probably April 8, '08.

DEAR HENRY,

Mine is the mood epistolary these days; not because I am dull but because I am very happy. The philosopher will tell me that it cannot last, the savant that it is not good for me, but all I can say is that three hours ago I laughed aloud, and somewhere in the dim city which my vile flesh covers I am laughing still. It is a strange city with dim and tortuous ways, down which eerie thoughts sway with the wind and crapulous emotions dance like the hares of March. But now the brave laughters have set all the windows ringing and my city is as lovely, no, almost as lovely, as the little town of a child's dreams where toffee is sold for twopence a hundredweight. Yet perhaps it is not good for me; certainly it cannot last.

Well, I feel, and I dare you to tell me that I am wrong, that neither of these considerations is of the smallest importance. The great things are that the weather is madly fine (finer than any theory of coincidences may include) that the earth is fair, that the sea is still the sea, and that I still retain that capacity for infinite enjoyment which age calls youth.

What tortures is God perfecting to torment me with when my triumph is over? God knows and cares. Only I know that my dream is worth them all, even though through the shadows I can distinguish far off the strange and ugly life that my brain would quite forsake. And though I call it a dream I believe that in truth my spirit is but newly stapped awake by God's most pointed pleasure. If this be life I shall begin to fear death, if this be death life is a game for fools.

Other men would ask me what I mean but you will know. It is folly to measure emotions by their causes. Surely I am wiser than the man who tears his threads asunder for money, or fame or a ballet-girl's padded legs.

I am old, but oddly here and there I am very young. And with all that best and most powerful part of me I cry out before the altars of the gods for all that civilisation has denied me. Youth ! Youth ! Youth ! There is nothing more to say.

Yrs

Richard.

THE PIER HOTEL,
EASTBOURNE,
April 9, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I am having a very good time and lovely weather. At all events Nature does *her* best to aid in the strewing. I hope you will come down one day this week. By a violent effort I kept myself away from the theatre last night. Partly asceticism, partly because it was sufficient for me to know that the children were in the same world as I. To-day however I intend to go twice ! and one of the leading actors takes tea with me. Meanwhile I suppose in London things are happening, but I should be four hundred times a fool if I allowed that consideration to spoil my dreams. Che sara sara as the costermongers have it, and I know pretty well that I am richer in vision-fabrics and fairy-gold than any purveyor of Brussels sprouts. (Bis !)

Meanwhile, you, I suppose, are engaged with your business and your problems. But may a poet be forgiven for asking whether you are coming down ? Perchance my eyes are prejudiced but surely this is a fine place to dream in. There are waves and cliffs and great smooth hills. Also there are children—from Drury Lane, London. The mere symbolism of the contrast almost frightens me. What is the difference between the forces of nature and those of civilisation. You see I give neither of them a capital, for they are not worth a damn. YOUTH ! and after that the dark. There is no other reasonable philosophy, no other possible religion, and it is not necessarily sad. I feel weary and grow old perhaps but I too was in Arcadia, and Arcadia does not die. So today I am in Eastbourne and perhaps there is something of the old hopefulness in this too.

I think you had better come down.

Yours

RICHARD.

Et in Barriecadia fui !

THE PIER HOTEL,
EASTBOURNE,
April 9, '08.

DEAR HENRY,

I did not receive your letter until I had posted mine so I hasten (as is my wont) to write you another. I am sorry you lost that forty bob (what's become of all the gold-en witnesses ?) but I hope it will be a lesson to you. I am just back from a walk on Beachy Head which was flowered with young actresses from Drury Lane, who asked me the time. As far as I could see there were no corpses of poets at the foot of it, but I still have faith. As for the moment, each moment of mine now is like an Eternity and that is just what each moment is worth. I shall write to you again when I discover the meaning of your joke. Sixpence is just about what I shall have when I have finished my capers and I shall be compelled to leave my landlord your bag, some silly clothes and a fine library of books. He might do worse, poor man. I have a return ticket (2nd class—I hate myself for not having taken a first) so Beachy Head is in no wise compulsory. I leave my decision on this and the other points till the moment comes for definite action. Then, I shall probably drift. Your poem is as dotty as Miss Heilgers [of the *Vanity Fair* staff] but is otherwise sane. It reminds me of wild roses.

I think your proposed visit should certainly take place tomorrow (Friday). There is a good train from Victoria at 9.45 and another at 12. If you come by the latter you will catch me at the hotel and we can see the show in the afternoon. No artist, no Bohemian, no aggregate of positive and negative passions can afford to neglect this invitation. I enclose details of cheap 1st class ticket by the earlier train. You had better wire the hour of your coming.

Your would-be comrade in Arcady,

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

THE PIER HOTEL,

EASTBOURNE,

Thursday Night, April 9, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

For God's sake send me some money. Not to pay an ignorant landlord who trains prize canaries—pooh! But to bathe the future of the drama in lilies, to make it vomit with chocolates, to waft it heavenwards in taxis. In exchange I make over to you all my worldly goods and the rights in all my MS. past and future, this letter being included. Money! Good God if this should stop me. Wire it and you may use my soul for a tiepin.

Yours

RICHARD.

Send lots.

Sat.

DEAR HARRY,

Just a line before breakfast. All is well. There is no need for the wild alarm but hardly concealed in your letter. If I was drunk when I wrote mine, it was with something finer and rarer than alcohol. This morning, your fiver aiding, I motor some of the girls to Hastings and back, stopping there to lunch and to shop. Understand I am not in love. That may come later but now I should be puzzled to say which of my puppets I like best. I come up to town tomorrow by their train and I think I shall go home to Maida Vale after that.

The Company goes on to Croydon and Bexhill. I shall see it through if I have to borrow from my father or even work !

Last year their tour lasted till July.

Yrs

R.B.M.

11 Alexandra Court,
Maida Vale, W.,
April 13, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I am up here again and am nursing my wounds with a certain patience I trust, I would not put it stronger. Unless the miraculous happens I think I am really and genuinely smashed this time, and that from an entirely unexpected quarter. I have cultivated the philosophy of the moment until ambition and friendship and tomorrow became like dim nothings; then I prepared to enjoy myself with my new philosophy, and of course discovered that I was not sufficiently impervious to outside impressions to support it. The future is foul with my present bleedings. I have fallen into love, as I fell into life, headlong, and consequently I am smitten with physical nausea. This it is to allow one's emotions to wallow in the winecups. I swear that I had steeled myself against every possible anti-climax, but having some faith in myself it never occurred to me that it was a climax which would make me quail. I shall go through with it, according to my limitations, and at least I travel over new ground. God knows what will happen. Your thought of setting G. Wilson to work on your poor mad friend made him tremble. I suppose to lose a friend is nothing to a King of the moment, but what is it to one in some awe of a week! I shall get over these things somehow, or go down before them, without the wise head-shakings of George. I think if he smote me now with his damnable logic I should curse him. You see, there are better dreams, and I have some right to be arrogant about them. Tomorrow I am keeping away from the bright eyes of death, if there be aught of will left in my body, and I may come down to see you. Anyhow, a letter to Blackfriars will reach me as I am sleeping there this week. (It should be a wonderful week! I am bubbling over with lyric poetry; I take her out to tea on Tuesday.) That parenthesis is the last word in wisdom and one of the last

words in beauty. I am taking her—of course she does not know, I wonder whether they ever do? But that doesn't matter in the least, the great thing is that I know. But Lord! how these dreamings upset one's mundane plans. Truly, I am an English gentleman.

Meanwhile, while I write to you at length about the workings of my soul that is not dirty whatever my flesh may be, you marry. I hope you will be happy, if you wish to be happy. At any rate, I hope your wife will enjoy herself; you will recognize the soundness of this——.

As for me I am a little bewildered as one who comes from a dark room into the sunlight; a little bruised emotionally and perhaps at the bottom of all a little desperate. But rightly handled this business may save me after all.

Yrs

RICHARD.

LONDON, S.E.
Apl. 25, '08.
(*Postcard.*)

DEAR H,

I have not been to Bexhill. Perhaps it was better so. It is not for a tired boy to seek to interpret fate. Only, from the grey morning and through the hot day and down to the cool time when the stars light up the sky my love fares on. And it is all one moment. I suppose we shall meet some day.

YRS
R.B.M.

. . . .

I pause here from reading these letters to marvel yet again at the glow which informs them, mingled with the torture of doubts and fears. Even now, from lack of discernment, or whatever it may be, the essence of Middleton's tragedy eludes me. What was he bothering about? Money to carry on his Arcadia? For all his desire for amber-silk dressing-gowns and luxury generally, "Were I as rich as Joel," as he wrote to me once, "I should only win a madhouse cell for myself;" which fate it is quite possible might have been his had he had enough money to indulge his desires.

Was it that he more or less consciously craved for physical possession of one or more of these girls—children, he called them, but they were girls of sixteen or seventeen, most of them, and knew fairly well what they were doing—and, being thwarted—his outward, somewhat Verlaine-like appearance was against him with women although he had an interior charm that half won them eventually—it rankled with him? I do not think that counted for much. Romantic as he was, he had not many illusions about that part of love which is physical pleasure and easing.

We may take it that poverty and sex-starvation did something towards obscuring his vision of "the thing as in itself it really is," but that the causes of his unrest lay deeper is certain. I sometimes think that his Scotch ancestry was too much for him. Christianity

may not be true—that is to say, there may be needs of the spirit it does not meet—and it is certain that the perversions of Christianity—Calvinism, for instance—have led to much purely imaginary hell. The errors of the fathers extend beyond the fourth generation and some suffer more than others for them. We owe something to posterity and may well seek for more light. Middleton never won through to the paganism he glimpsed at times. His last words—in a letter he left for me—ended with the quotation, " A humble and a contrite heart O Lord thou wilt not despise." I do at least believe that much that he took for reality was mere illusion.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. Probably April '08.

DEAR HARRY,

After leaving you and Summers I went my way and met Mother Goose himself—he lives in Stamford St. it seems—and we had a pleasant walk and met one of the girls, so I found three of my dear dreamy creatures in one day. Master Jack Frost has tea with me tomorrow—he is a nice boy though painfully plain and I could do no less as a neighbour. My garland of Lily's proceeds apace and contains, I know, some good lines. But I wonder whether I love Lily or youth, or is it only compassion for the little boy I never was that moves me? The doubt does not prevent me from writing good verses. I want to love something or other anyhow: love kills the ego with a surfeit of egoism, and I appreciate but do not like mine. Elegy on an ego, dead of the springtime. Yet I was sorry when I sought to bury it kitten-wise under the vine. It is no use muddling our egos—we must try and hatch them into little bare-bottomed Cupids by means of the incubator of love. Columbus cracked his at one end and so they named America after somebody else, a circumstance which on reflection seems fortunate for Columbus.

As you see I am cheerful and I rejoice that it takes as little to make me happy as it does to make me suicidal. It is not everyone who can say that remarked Dorothy Wesley, and agreeing with that wise lady, I can afford to ignore Dolly Shaw's observations about tomorrow and the future of the race.

I will talk no more nonsense but will likely come and see you on Thursday morning.

Yrs

Richard Middleton
amateur of love.

7 Blackfriars Rd.

No date. Probably May '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I suppose that you are back from your honeymusings by now, and I trust that you have had as good a time as you deserved. I owe you a debt of gratitude for your letter as but for that I should not have met a certain theatrical company at Victoria Station on Saturday night. On your news I went there at a venture and the gods crowned my head with roses. George stops at Bexhill for some months which is a pity as he would have been company for a certain lonely poet of my ken. Lilian with two of the other girls have tea with me on Saturday, if all goes well, and thereafter we go to the Oxford. It was a great shock to me not to go to Bexhill and I think my baser ego (if it be my baser ego) deserves a little jam. There should be a short article of mine in the next Academy and I have given them another and better one. Also I extracted three more books from them so at all events I am not neglecting my chances there. For the rest no doubt something will turn up said Mr. Micawber. I write prose nowadays with ease and enjoyment (nearly) but the poetry sticks. I want to write love poems and the spring won't let me. I am to take the chair at your dinner, by the way, but I think to have eluded the difficult task of proposing your health. The committee consists of Louis, George (Wilson !), and me, which happy trinity was successfully devised by George himself. I have had a long and very friendly chat with Louis, so things are going better there. I think Louis prefers me when I am not successful and there are moments when I am inclined to agree with Louis on the matter. This has been quite a long chatter, but I have not yet said anything about your recent marriage. It struck me that it was a little too much like buying a postage stamp. I would hesitate to condemn anyone who refused to be bound by so unimpressive a ceremony. For yourself I suppose that you are the same : that is, that it will take you

some months or perhaps years to find out how much you have altered. But I should think the whole business ought to do you good. I wish I were married to the girl of my heart, and yet again I don't. She would not starve at all prettily—She is of the type for whom one makes sacrifices without expecting or receiving any gratitude, and so she will do me good in her unconscious way. And it is she I want.

Summers has already been chattering to Wilson and so I suppose it will go the round. Well, if they offend me I must avoid them. I will only be hurt in my own way; am I not made in the likeness of a god? George is very sunny, however, and very proud—quite pleasant to look upon. One day perhaps you and I will rediscover the merits of simplicity too——

Yrs sincerely
RICHARD.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT AT 7 BLACKFRIARS.

No date. April or May, '08.

DEAR HENRY,

I pause from the heavy labours of the professional reviewer to play for the nonce the amateur letter-writer. These are to tell you that the dinner is for 7.30 and that I will meet you at the Bedford Head at 3 p.m. or earlier or later if you prefer it and wire to Blackfriars. We might pay a sentimental visit to the Euston Road, and try and find someone to come to tea with us, or we might not !

The moon across the world of gentler light
  Down to the morning drives her starry teams,
While I enrich the treasuries of night
  With purple robes and jewels wrought in dreams.
And though upon the silent hours I keep
  My sleepless watch, upon my soul there falls
Rest beyond rest, sleep that is more than sleep,
  Love ! from your castle walls.

Good verse.

Yrs

RICHARD.

. . . .

The first stanza of *Dust of Dreams,* published in *Poems & Songs.* He had intended calling his first volume of poems by the former title.

Monday in the merry month of May, 1908.

DEAR HARRY,

Thank you very much for the things—perhaps they will help me to endure my body! All day long I have toiled vainly on an Academy article, and I fall to this in the hope that it may vanquish my sterility. But an article however mad it be is yet a fact, and I am a dealer in dreams, and it is to my dear improbable dreamings that my mind recurs. How can a man work whose soul owns not one pleasure-house but fifty? And fate has willed that I may not explore their beauties sufficiently to destroy them. Pah! I can't even write letters. Today at Lyons' I saw a bland and cheerful Louis—also I brought away four bad novels from the Academy, and now the sky is damnably grey and my heart is sick, sick with the spring. It is true that an errant brain helps me to support such tiresome trivialities as expectant landlords and newsagents, for they cannot shake the fastnesses of the Euston Road [*where one of the girls lived*]. But equally I cannot work, and without it I am wholly lost. There are moments when I could envy the emotional limitations of an Anglican pork-butcher. There are moments when I could eat my own flesh like the gentleman in Dante. There are moments——

Yrs

RICHARD.

FARNHAM,

June 2, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I feel that I ought to write some sort of answer to your letter though I don't know the least what to say. On the one hand I am racked by toothache and on the other my thinking apparatus is completely out of gear. In truth I believe that I have ended in becoming an emotion, but what I am I do not know. These last few days since you left me have been to me like a calm, cold dream. The will to reason, a quality which I never possessed in any great degree, has left me entirely and it seems to me that I do not matter in the least.

Your letter is full of commonsense and this convinces me that you have after all developed your imagination to some purpose. But the proposed interview with mine host stirs my pride to repugnance. You may say if you will that beggars have no right to be proud but to this I retort that it is all we can be. But I return to London early tomorrow and no doubt these matters will arrange themselves somehow or other. There is no doubt that I have had the devil of a fine time and I have no right nor any great desire to grumble at the magnitude of the bill. I will write and let you know if I acquire a serviceable address.

Please ascribe the inefficiencies of this letter to Nature's blundering in the matter of my teeth. I can write no more.

Yours

RICHARD.

I hope your environment improves !

. . . .

The first mention here of the neuralgia which had a deal to do with wearing him out.

BRIARWOOD,
LOWER BOURNE,
FARNHAM,
SURREY,
Sunday, June 21st, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I start on my romantic tour No. 2 tomorrow night I think. I have given your address per letter to my charwoman and she may or may not send you on some letters. If so please keep them till I can tell you where I am. They don't matter much anyhow, I imagine. I mean to ride by night and sleep by day and given decent weather I should enjoy myself. At all events I shall bear my dreams with me and there is no reason why I should be lonely. If I get to Eastbourne or any other Christian place I shall write and let you know. But in truth I don't care a damn where I get to, "as long as I find some others there."

Yrs

RICHARD M.

BRIGHTON,

June 23rd, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

Picture me seated on the West Pier in the midst of the sea I love, writing to my friend. It is a fair evening and a tint of red in the sky promises well for the morrow. I smoke a pipe carved in the likeness of my king and bear up against the wiles of a God who will not let me walk on the grass in the pleasant parks of love. I had two punctures riding down and ten of the miles that part me from my sister the sea I walked. I confess that I had my bad time this afternoon. For half an hour illusions passed and I saw that I was ugly. I saw even that this excursion which at first sight appears courageous is only one step in a careful course of cowardice. But how can I forsake my dreams? It is quite impossible to sleep out at nights at this season of the year. Though it be fine in space our planet is wrapped in a wretched coat of wet mist, and the dew makes ponds where the green fields are by day. But a man could spend a bedless holiday well enough, riding by night and sleeping by day for a pound a week and rheumatic fever. This being so I fear it would be madness for you to tempt fortune on the wheel. But I shall be in Eastbourne tomorrow and if you care to run down I should be very glad to see you. You will find me by the bandstand on the front between the pier and Beachy Head. I shall post this now. Anyhow, if you cannot come I shall write again.

Yours

RICHARD.

Bring my letters if there are any. Who knows?

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,
HASTINGS,
July 26th, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

Thank you for the wires. Life is a losing fight against the preposterous. Love is the triumph of imagination over truth, and so forth. Indeed I have no heart for fighting—I can but sit and groan in spirit because I am so fond of loving—and for the first time in my life I have doubts about my ultimate triumph. Hitherto I have always felt at heart that I was Fortune's child, but now I wonder——

Yrs
RICHARD.

. . . .

What he was doing at Hastings just then I don't remember—he had probably gone there—as he did the year after—in an attempt to recapture the first fine careless rapture he had had with the girls when they were there.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

Sept. 22nd, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

Thank you for your ecstatic notes. I have a poem in V.F. this week which I have taken the liberty to inscribe to your initials. You will understand why when you read. I have been working like hell having written 5000 words in the last three days. I can always work in the autumn. I did a story for V.F. but the bitch Louise has held it over till next week. Well, the time will come——. Meanwhile I dream great works and do little ones. Last night I was at Jepson's with Machen and Cecil Chesterton. Afterwards I went with C to his house and met Chesterton père. There is a picture there of G.K. as a little boy with long golden hair looking like the prettiest little girl you ever saw in your life, prettier I think than any I have seen. Well, well, all his beauty has flown into his pen since, which supports my contention that Art is opposed to Life.

I think that you might send me a P.O. in return for my dedication. There is good precedent for this in the lives of the great, and I am moreover busted. Had I put your full name at the top I should have demanded gold. You will see why when you read the poem.

Yrs Richard.

. . . .

Pen sketches of a pawnbroker's sign, a heart with an arrow through it bleeding into a glass with a smoking cigar beneath, and a scroll with " To H.S." at the top of it, end this letter, which, incidentally is interesting for its reference to the Chesterton picture. When G.K.C. comes fully into his own with collectors, what will they not give for it !

The poem referred to appears in *Poems & Songs* and promises both of us immortality.

. . . " when the Immortal wearies of his moods
And is no more, our song shall capture still
The place of timeless silences, and fill
With grateful rapture the cold solitudes."

I doubt it, said the carpenter.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. Probably '08.

DEAR HARRY,

Your letter was kind—but in a way I am beyond the pale now and I doubt whether anything under the sky can be of any service to me. All my days I have sought life only in emotions, and I have reached a point where I feel that I am dead and putrescent when I am not emotionally drunk. I have just sat and watched this piece of paper for an hour and a half, only to realise that there is nothing any more than requires literary expression as far as I am concerned. I have heard the stars sing and smelt the honey on the lips of young girls and art is become a cold thing. Also, I have lived too much, and yet I starve for lack of life. But anyhow the business could not last much longer. These thrills which are all I want are like death for the mind and the body and were I as rich as Joel I should only win a madhouse cell for myself. I see all these things as clearly as a man may, but it is useless to expect a man who has drunk nectar with the gods to creep down and eat pease pudding with the worms of Fleet Street. You advise me to earn my living, but it is a kind of living stultification of my philosophy that it is in my power to earn and nothing more. Why should I do dirty work for an utterly undesirable end? For the death in life which is the reward of the intellectual attracts me not a whit. I want excess and excess and more excess and at least I will give the worms something more to chew than imitation parchment. Patience is the chiefest vice, and I am glad that I have not got it. The wind has come across the mountains and made me mad and by my soul I do not wish it otherwise.

Yours

Richard.

7 Blackfriars Rd., S.E.

No date. Probably late '08.

DEAR HARRY,

I meant to answer your letter last night but I was dead for sleep and couldn't do it. I did not altogether like its tone, as a matter of fact, because I felt that in some dim fashion you were condemning yourself. Why you should I don't know, for if you have erred it has been on the side of generosity, both in your friendship with your wife and me, and that is a very decent kind of weakness to be afflicted with. If I may speak frankly I should advise you to keep things pleasant between you and B—— as far as possible. In many ways she is very young and if she has her own way at first, she will soon find out the drawbacks of that position. As for me, there is no reason why I should not be kept firmly out of your domestic relationship without impairing our friendship. It is a pity B—— don't like me, but as she don't there is no reason why I should annoy her with my company. In other words, in future I must be contented with the gallery. You see I am regarding the matter in its most devilishly practical aspect so far as it regards me. Your way I can hardly be impudent enough to advise. You are a man who quite rightly prefers to dree his own weird, though possibly you are a little too fond of dreeing in general. But perhaps I may venture to say that I feel sure that your welfare (the accomplishment of things) lies in friendship with your wife, and that at times, especially in dealing with women, efforts to achieve a full understanding do not make for friendship. Let her have her own way in little things and you will find that she is not sufficiently interested in the big things to interfere with them. But anyhow you will go your own way.

I work a little and nurse my poems with a view to our volume. They make a poor show in bulk but we must see. Meanwhile I am waiting, not actively unhappy but a little faithless as to the happiness which is to come. Keeping the flag flying is, I consider, an ignoble pursuit and cramping

for the soul. If only the gods would let me love something *hard*. But I have the soul of an over-fed cat fallen on lean days, and the memory of old fires and dear delicious strokings brings me no comfort. Why did God ever feed me on Nestlé's?

Yours

RICHARD.

. . . .

We arrive here at matters touching upon my private affairs. I publish the letters, and others of 1909 to follow, because they still further reveal the man who wrote them and because, after twenty years, I, to whom they were addressed, can look back at myself almost as if I were somebody else, and with only the mildest curiosity. Doubtless we are essentially "ourselves to all eternity," but there is a sense in which, changing as we do with the years, we become different to what we were.

As regards the subject-matter, there is a parallel in the Boswell-Johnson triangular difficulty. Towards the end of 1908—after the above letter was written—Middleton's troubles with his Blackfriars landlord became so acute that he agreed to stay at Raynes Park, where I was then living. He remained for three months, learning something of women and their excessive regard for appearances; and, after a holiday at Hastings, went to live at Wimbledon, not far from me.

11 Alexandra Court,
Maida Vale, W.
No date. Late 1908.

DEAR HARRY,

Thanks very much. I went into the city yesterday and paid up £9 18 4½ and in the evening I did two reviews and a piece of an article, or I would have written before. I return home tomorrow night. I feel very fit and workmanlike, though I shall be glad to get away from Blackfriars. I think there is a corpse in my rooms there somewhere. Perhaps the corpse of young Richard Middleton. 'Tis a pity, he was a nice boy. How goes your work? My article for the Academy is very cheeky and I fear Douglas whom heaven preserve, will not take it. One of these days we must meet by appointment and go and see him at the offices. We might rehearse a few subjects for light conversation and take him out to lunch. I feel inclined to bow down my head to Mammon with W—— and all the other swine. How would a set of verses to A.D. do, do you think?

That fair youth crowned with holly berries
With moonlight eyes and lips like cherries,
Late editor of Notes and Queries.

The last is for the rhyme. Another.

In W——'s eye Lord Douglas spat and said—
Now tell me truly is God Pan quite dead—
And W—— kissed his feet with humble head.

I have left out all the obvious things in the last one which makes its meaning elusive. But why be savage, or rather, why be Middleton? Surely Pecksniff is for all time and of all professions, only W——'s architecture is mostly ecclesiastical. I raise a pint stoop of ink to you oh Savage. Let us sit down to write our odes and publish the consequent sonnets. But Pan is dead.

Yrs
R.B.M.

BRIARWOOD,

BLACK LAKE,

FARNHAM,

SURREY,

Tuesday afternoon at 3
very fine and frosty.

No date. Late '08.

DEAR HENRY,

The above is my true and authentic address as appreciated by my aesthetic soul and by the postal authorities. Let no man seek to rob me of my sombre waters for they alone can cleanse the white feet of my love.

The swallow duly brought your letter to my house in the tree-tops and both Wendy and I were naturally very pleased with its purport. I do not know what Liza would have thought of it if she had seen it, for I believe in servants keeping their places, my great-aunt having been a Swedenborgian. You, with your subtle evaluation of hereditary taints, will recognize the significance of that. Still, Liza is a good girl, and very useful now, when the brown leaves of autumn will keep blowing into the house.

[He alludes here of course to *Peter Pan* characters.]

I note your stipulation with regard to young Hyacinth; but I hope nevertheless to cure you of your prejudice against periodical literature. Of such things as these are our worlds made, and I am only grateful that someone has made them so pretty.

I now come to the Agreement between tenant and landlord. In the absence of any Writers of Sonnets (Sixes and Eights. Frank Harris, his gag) I state my stipulations informally.

1. That this Act be hereafter known as The Pauper Poet's Maintenance Act 1908.

2. That Henry Sedley Savage be hereafter known as The Landlord or Curly.

3. That Richard Barham Middleton be hereafter known as The Sunny Poet or Nibs.

Whereas it appears that the A.L. has a golden room untenanted and further that whereas it appears that the S.P. has no place like home, then it is obvious that nothing whatever could be done without the co-operation of Mrs. Henry Savage (who would hereafter be named Wendy if I had not already used the name in this letter).

But now, just under the stars, I pause. On the whole we had better discuss these things in person. The sanctity of the home, the privacy of the domestic tyles, no ! tiles, these things are not for the profane outspokenness of letters. I shall whisper my mind to you along a moonbeam and you may reply down the golden rut of a comet. A tush for agreements !

Soberly, I look forward to 45, Lambton Road with a certain keen delight. I think we may accomplish some good work by day, I am sure we shall have some jolly evenings ; and the whole business strikes me oddly as the fulfilment of an old dream. It will be a hard thing if the three of us cannot succeed in taking life lightly and death not at all. And if there are stars outside the window of my night nursery I think I ought to behave myself.

I have written to the aunt and though she has not yet replied I probably go to Chesham on Saturday. I will write about this later.

It is very cold here but like a good boy I try to work. Please convey to your wife how much I appreciate the idea of dwelling under her roof. I shall try to be a good tenant ! ! But we are all the children of the future.

Yours

RICHARD.

There are 27 asterisks in this letter. Have you let off any fireworks since I left ?

No address or date.

Probably late in 1908.

DEAR HARRY,

I met Lilian last night (by accident as far as I was concerned) and today she has tea with me so that I can't come down. Tomorrow I go to Jepson's, perhaps with my sister, and on Monday afternoon I had thought of coming down to see you—and stopping at your house on Monday night for the races. Does this fit in with your plans? Thus I dodge the landlord and other circumstances of ill vintage. What price Douglas and Shaw in th'Academy? Is it not bonny? What an ass Shaw is becoming as time goes on. A man cannot be widely conceited without paying for it with brains, but Shaw is incredible.

If you write before Monday please write to 11, Alexandra Court Maida Vale. I shall stay there.

Yrs

RICHARD.

TAVISTOCK HOTEL,
COVENT GARDEN,
Nov. 15, '08.

DEAR HARRY,

To report progress. I went to the Omar dinner last night with Rake and Jepson and we all got a little drunk, not very. I was introduced to the divine [Clement] Shorter. He said to me, "Are you the Mr. Middleton who writes the poetry in Vanity Fair?" I said, "I am, but what a memory you must have, Mr. Shorter!" He said, "Oh I try and keep in touch with things; I liked some of your poetry very much." Verb sap.

If you have a chance of beholding the face of Mr.——, M.P. do so. He has a face like a perverted Wilde. Lewis Hind was near me and he was telling us that the English Review (which is edited by F. Hueffer) is bound to be a failure. Machen's bugbear,—— proves to be a very mild and courteous old chap. Wells was there and Jacobs and other people. I enjoyed myself very much. Anon, I leave for Chesham. In fact I only write this letter, as you will probably have discovered already to kill the moisty morning hours, and make me to forget my headache. Why why why did I have six benedictines after leaving Frascati's last night? I am a poor, sick poet. I shall see you, I hope, on Saturday.

Yrs sincerely

HERBERT J. CATHIE.

. . . .

Cathie was the landlord of the Prince's Head, where the New Bohemians once met. He liked his glass.

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,

HASTINGS,

Sunday, Feb. 7th, 1909.

DEAR HENRY,

The sea has its pearls, and faring in these salty places I offer you my gems of speech. Conceive them if you will rather as cockney oyster-shells of thought than such pink fancies as children delight in, yet still if I write not wholly amiss, there should sound in them an echo of the weary wind that blows from Spain, some small detached voice that murmurs of the peace of the far waves.

Yesterday, ten thousand years ago yesterday, you remarked on Raynes Park station that you did not altogether know why I should go. There is an unreasoning instinct that makes cats seek lonely places in which to die, and that drives sulky children to weep in solitary woods, and I fancy, in my sea-born detachment, that it was some such natural impulse that made me flee from the suburb that has given me shelter since November. I might say, with the waning cat, that I have had a very happy time, and that such things in their nature must have an end; but for the moment I prefer to travel with the aggrieved child and charge the Olympians with injustice. I am a man very much accustomed to being in the wrong, and I feel therefore the greater surprise when I examine the causes of my debacle as the agreeable lodger. Stevenson summed the business up a long time ago:—"We are not damned for doing wrong but for not doing right." Of this nature is my damnation.

And yet, in my way, I tried to do right, where possibly a little judicious hypocrisy would have been more expedient. Had I arrived at toleration I might even now have been tolerated at 45 Lambton Road. But in my folly I desired friendship, and in my vanity I thought I had achieved it. I can conceive nothing in life more humiliating than this. Day after day I have talked to your wife under the impression that she liked me; I have given her my silly confidences

and my absurd egotisms, such things as one gives to a friend; and all the time while I prattled on, she was resenting my ugliness and my slovenly clothes, hating me perhaps, because I sponged for my bread. There are some things that I cannot remember without feeling physically sick. I went to the show at Surbiton because I thought that my interest in her performance would give her pleasure; and she was hoping that I would not come because my appearance would disgrace her in the eyes of her real friends. If I had known this at the time I should have felt hurt, I suppose; but the fact that I did not perceive it annihilates me. What am I to make of my neighbours if, while they speak me fairly, their flesh is creeping with repulsion?

Of course there was nothing to do but to come away and try to forget what a fool I had been. As I told you, I would not wilfully drive your wife to spend her evenings in the kitchen, because she knew I was waiting in the dining-room to talk to her. Once last week I remember I asked her what was the matter. Here, surely, was her chance to spare me a little of this; but she preferred to put me off with a smile, and I suppose in my vague efforts to do right, I gave new offence. How could I know what was wrong? People never seem to realise that no man knows himself to be a swine, however just the classification may be.

Of course I know that Prague is not a suburb of London and that Nature hates Art, but I cannot heal my self-conceit with phrases. At moments the sea charms me and I feel aloof from everything and everybody, and then I remember and hate myself. I know it's no good; I wish I knew with equal certainty what is any good. The happy days I spent at Raynes Park have reacted with a vengeance, and I grope in the dark past for portraits. Twice I have gone up to town with her in the morning, and I suppose there were people she knew on the platform. There was the children's party at 71 where I stopped till the end, making a fool of myself. I even asked her to come to the theatre with me because I can get tickets easier than I can get new clothes. I wonder whether M. is glad that other children

can no longer taunt her with having a shabby acquaintance. You may laugh but it's true enough I daresay.

Then there's the question of money. I can see what she thought of me there and probably she was quite right. I had honestly hoped that I should be able to make up a little with Harris's cheque, but it didn't come, and I suppose I allowed myself to accept too readily the comfort of having somewhere to live and something to eat. But when I joked about the bills and things, it was because I did, and not because I did not, worry about the burden I was on the household. To sponge is an ugly business, but if I am right in defining it as the acceptance of favours from someone who is not your friend and for whom you can do nothing in return, I have been guilty, it seems. But I thought she was my friend.

I'm afraid this isn't a very cheerful letter but perhaps it clears up things a bit.

Yours

RICHARD.

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,

HASTINGS.

No date. Probably Feb. 10*th*, '09.

DEAR HARRY,

Thank you for your letter. It seems I am a child; I wish I had the child's bland habit of forgetting the past and ignoring the future. If I had, at the present moment I should purr like an ecstatic cat. Before me there is a sea and a not unfriendly morning sun. I have just eaten two excellent soft-roed bloaters. What more could man's heart desire? Yet I could cry for love and the mad heart of a boy that made me a poet. Very likely the girls were women in miniature and incapable of friendship, but I left them before I had found them out, and so when I look along Hastings front I sigh for the young faces that made my life a song when I was really child-like last year. There is a very decent and amusing chap staying here, an ex-hotel proprietor, and he lightens the days a little, but I have nothing to love in this place but memories, and they are too strong. Once I fell in love with a touring-company and the glamour of my effort will be with me for ever!

I saw the silly old uncle yesterday. He only blithered over me for a few minutes, however. How can such an ass grow so fine a beard, I wonder. He looks like Solomon and talks like a charwoman's second husband, at least intellectually his observations have no greater value.

It was wet yesterday, it is fine today. I think it will be wet tomorrow—God made me a sentient being in order that I could indulge in such reflections.

"But what of the day after tomorrow?" asks Peter with a boy's curiosity. "Child, some things are too sacred——" I think Abel must have provoked Cain with that last remark. I have rambled sufficiently and my head aches in consequence.

You might lend me a quid till Saturday if you can spare it. You will get a letter addressed to me from V.F. on that day which you can open and thereby repay yourself —you can tell it by the typewritten address—My billiards has been very good down here.

Yours

RICHARD.

Don't trouble about the bed. It's no use.

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,

HASTINGS,

No date. Probably Feb. 11*th*, '09.

DEAR HARRY,

I'm afraid you took it for granted that the typewritten letter you sent on to me contained bullion. It didn't. I never got the money from V.F. till Saturday night. That's why I wanted to borrow it from you in advance as they toss for drinks here at night, and it's awkward not to be in it; as you can imagine the sociability of the little gentleman I spoke of becomes embarrassing under these circumstances. But anyhow it doesn't matter. People in my vicinity are regarding me as a monster of meanness, and I am hating them because I haven't any tobacco. So at Raynes Park they loathed me because I was unkempt, and I hated them because I was poor. It is impossible for anyone who has ever loved to be satisfied with this sort of thing, and life promises to be nothing else for me. If I was in a work-house some mischance would prevent me from mingling properly with the pauper society. They would mislike my boots and I should hate their cravats, and all the time I should get no fun, no fun. What in God's name is the matter with me? I suppose the mark of the beast is on me somewhere and people would smell it out even if my actions did not betray me. Oh I have been a swine! and then? I think I have been a little of the child-angel too. It is not swinishness that warms my heart when I look at the big sea. It is the better part of me that loves things, and this is the part that people always manage to hurt when they want to chastise the pig whose smell annoys their nostrils. And something in me goes crying, crying, and my life is wet and weary with tears.

I am tired, unspeakably tired of the whole business. Life probably holds for me a large number of surprises, but I feel sure that when closely examined they will prove to be unpleasant. Meanwhile, weariness is my reward. I cannot do what I want to, I cannot be what I want to be,

and the other things do not amuse me. As there is only a little space left on the paper I will cease humping. I cut the enclosed from T.P.'s Weakly. It's a fine poem but if the editor understood what it meant, he would not have printed it ! I have not written any great works down here, somehow my mood does not lend itself to such compositions and the world suffers in consequence. Meanwhile you plough your furrow in Raynes Park. It's strange to me to reflect that I once shared your exile in that place of the damned, and what is stranger still, enjoyed it. I wonder how long you will go on there. Somehow, forgive my pessimism, I doubt whether you will long survive its disappearance.

Yours

RICHARD.

ROYAL OAK HOTEL,

HASTINGS,

No date. Probably Feb. 12*th*, '09.

DEAR HARRY,

P.O.O. (Post Office Order) arrived safely today and mocked my grumpy and pessimistic mood of last night. A golden sovereign will buy 3 lbs 5 ozs of my tobacco, or it will finance four drunks or it will stamp two hundred and forty letters to H. Savage Esq of Raynes Park. Today the sun shines very brightly on the sea. I doubt whether there is any yesterday: I know there is no tomorrow; and if little wistful ghosts walk along the front to meet me, they fill me rather with a mellow sadness than with any bitterness for the past. I have eaten wild raspberries and it does not seem likely that I shall eat any more, but the lips of many of my neighbours have never tasted the joy of the sharp, sweet fruit at all. That is where I score. I enclose the poem I forgot to put in last night. Of course you know it.

Yours

RICHARD.

(*Probably*) 8 ALEXANDRA RD.,

Friday, 28th May, 1909.

DEAR HENRY,

So the partnership is dissolved! So at least I gather from the news of today. It took me a little aback and I fear I did not keep my face before Tom, and yet, as I realise now, there was humour to be found in the situation. Harris had asked me to lunch (so I could not have come anyhow dear Lord!) and I spent my last penny riding over to borrow my train fare. But you had gone a-roaming with my (even you cannot deprive me of that pronoun) and your dreams, and so I had gravely to tramp up to town for my Moselle at nine shillings a bottle while you took your (and my) girls out for the day! Think of poor, silly Richard walking through the dust with his tears and his petulancies and his bitter little thoughts? He lost his way in Fulham because he would not ask the way; I think he will lose his way to the Hesperides for the same reason. But they tell me that for all his folly he is something of a poet, and this brings me to the purport of this letter.

I have endeavoured, as you may possibly have noticed, to pitch this communication in a low key, the key in which business letters are pitched. I am damnably bothered here about my rent, and as you are interested in poets I thought you might like to send me a quid, as this sort of botheration interferes very much with my work. To show that I am a real working poet I enclose proofs.

If you feel like it you can tell me to go to hell. I don't know that it would altogether surprise me. I hardly know what would surprise me. Nor do I know where I shall find another friend.

Yours

RICHARD.

8 Alexandra Rd.,
Wimbledon, S.W.,
Sunday, May 30th, '09.

DEAR HENRY,

With the wisdom of the serpent I have slept on your letter to find, naturally enough, that today is no wiser than yesterday. My letter, which was I suppose a kind of ultimatum, was written when I was a little drunk and very tired, yet it represented fairly enough my anger with Thursday and Friday last week when I had rather more than my share of the dregs of life. On the whole I think your conception of the situation is just, but you make one mistake. Whatever you may have been in the past, whatever you may be in the future, at the present moment you are not a poet. You are simply damnably human, and until you have dreed your weird, human you must remain. I want to make this clear because I have doubted if you realised it. In the whole matter of these children you have acted exactly as any human being with an individuality would act. You have acted and spoken and thought in the way that my brother or Charlton for instance would have done. You have chased no mad butterflies, dreamed no fierce dreams ; you are simply a child picking cherries. As you say in your letter you find in them an escape from the sordid monotony of your normal existence. I, as you know, regard them as the whole aim and object of my existence. That is the difference between our positions.

Now really it is idle to seek further for the causes of these present discontents. If you had always been human there could have been no question of any friendship between us, because I have yet to meet the *human* being who can tolerate me at the end of a month of close acquaintanceship. I am too interested in exciting and exhausting my own emotions to spare that time to the vanity of my neighbours that courtesy demands. I am an egotist, which means that I can only enjoy social intercourse with egotists

of equal power. But the moment a man becomes human his ego dwindles; he becomes a unit rather than an individual; and you have surprised me during the last few weeks by making demands on me for those little things that egos so comfortably do without. You have asked me, over and over again, possibly unconsciously, for sympathy, and you have been patently disgusted when I have not given it to you. If I ask anyone for sympathy, it is only in order that I may throw it away when I have got it: it is the intellectual exercise of making out my case a hard one to my fellows that appeals to me; the reward is worthless.

Even more significant, in terms of your new humanity is your attitude towards the question of money. Of course these things are impossible between friends, but when we were both impossible persons it did not matter. Now that one of us at all events is cured, the situation certainly seems to require adjustment. And the adjustment can only be of one character. The moment there is speech of "a definite arrangement" (really, your phrase is pathetic), there can only be one arrangement. I must not spend your money any more, and having none of my own, I shall be damned uncomfortable. Unfortunately, this involves other things. I hardly suppose you would derive much pleasure from my society if you had reason to believe that I was hungry or damnably worried about rent and things of that sort, and there are even less pleasant possibilities than these. You admit that you went to Kettering alone because, at the moment, you did not want me to be there. I do not know whether it has occurred to you that the only thing that rendered that desired solitude possible was the fact that you had money and I had not. Now I would not credit you with using such a weapon intentionally at any time, but as long as it existed I don't see how we could get on together very well—and this new arrangement will of course strengthen it. Reverting to your letter, I would remind you that between patron and poet a definite arrangement might be necessary, but hardly between two poets.

The fact is, much as we may both regret it, I am no

longer in any sense necessary to you. You can satisfy yourself of this by a simple test. Ask yourself whether at any given moment you would rather meet Charlton or myself. I don't say this in any bitterness but rather as one who notices that rhubarb is backward this year. There was a time when you thought it worth while to put up with my scarcely lovable qualities, but that time is dead. You have been more irritated with me during the last two months than during the whole course of our friendship, and I have never been at greater pains to give you pleasure. This, I would emphasize, is not in any way a reproach. It is merely a chronicling of facts that may illuminate a rather obscure business.

Now with regard to the children I will say a word. No, on second thoughts I won't, it's no good. All's fair in love—let's leave it at that.

Besides they won't concern me any more, or you or my family or the Bohemians or anyone else on God's earth. It's strange how things are dropping off me. First the office and then the N.B.'s and then my family and now Drury Lane and you. Oh and there was your wife—she scored somehow. I think when I am with the children all these things are like a bad dream, and when I am not with them they themselves are like a bad dream too. God ! when I look out of window at the red may and the fading chestnut bloom I wonder whether after all he may not be a humourist of some subtlety. Downstairs the asses play hymns for their little souls' sake. I had rather they played those than Mandy [a Drury Lane song] because I have a morbid nature, but why do they play Sun of my Soul which I used to sing by my bedside o' nights when I was a little boy ? Possibly God is plucking another chair from under my buttocks. HA-HA as Georgey used to say.

And now get you gone to your games and forget me and quote my verses. Of late I have played the scarcely enviable part of Old Man of the Sea, and I lay down the role with a certain relief. If the stakes had not been so high, I would not have troubled you, and incidentally myself, so long, but I have not maddened my emotions all

these years in vain, and things mean a good deal to me. At least my intellect is still clear when I choose to employ it and I realise the hopelessness of compromise. If I pretended to bury my dreams and met you on neutral ground, you would tell me of your pleasant little suppers with Christine! Believe me if there were any chance of successful humbug I would snatch at it but there is none. So I give you back my share of your freedom and wonder vaguely what I shall get in exchange.

I cannot, ever interfering, deprive myself of the pleasure of giving you a final piece of advice—You are now human—stay so!—you will have a better time.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

G.D. lives at Islington. If you go to Watford it would please Lily Randall very much if you took her down. Perhaps you could arrange it through Wendy. She is an ugly girl but pleasant. I think I promised Lily this.

. . . .

"Old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago!" I comment here to add that there are no more letters until December of this year, not because of the quarrel—it was made up immediately—but because they are lost.

3 Alexandra Road,
Wimbledon, S.W.,
Thursday, Dec. 16, 1909.

DEAR HARRY,

It's a long time since I wrote you a letter, but today's a grey day and I'm alone at home, and I can't work or read or sleep, so I must e'en fall to an act for which I am little suited. Conceive me if you will, the most bloodless of entomologists, chasing an unhappy beetle in order to transfix it with a pin. Allow that my pen is the pin, and that it is possible for a man to double the parts of beetle and entomologist (which I doubt !). " My God ! " said the archbishop hastily unbuttoning his gaiters, " the man must be mad ! " " There or thereabouts," replied the bible-chewer calmly, " but God made me, your Grace." " Tut," said the archbishop testily. " Tut ! " and I for one consider that the archbishop was justified. God has no patience with people who chew their own bibles. None the less I betake me to the pin.

Louise last night succeeded in giving me a life-like and convincing picture of a new Richard Middleton, not less bestial and loathsome than the old, Richard Middleton in fact as he is in the eyes of young girls. The portrait was not the less convincing that she gave it unconsciously, that is to say, that it was not the portrait that she thought she was giving me. She touched in the details with a certain deadly precision, here a shade from Lily's conception and here a tint from, say, Wendy's discovery of me, and she finally set the name in the corner of her creation by saying that she respected me. Placing the finished work in the half-light of Christine's fears, it occurs to me that that young woman treated me with an extraordinary tolerance. Think of it, Harry ! She fed and talked and went to theatres alone with me ! Poor, timid, little Christine and her monster. Beauty and the Beast ; and to think that even now perhaps she can't find anyone any better.

I have been feeling sick in the pit of my stomach all day,

which is presumably where my vanity lives, though there was nothing in Louise's finger-nail sketch that I had not previously suspected and expressed in my poems. It is a strange thing that while my intuitions about myself and how I strike other people are *always* right, I am always knocked off my perch by circumstantial evidence supporting them. Heaven knows, in my maddest moments I never suspected any of the girls of being attracted by me, but I did think vaguely that some of them appreciated me as a kind of amiable purse-bearing companion. Louise has made this sort of agreeable compromise impossible for me in future. I shall either have to chase the girls in the spirit of X—— in his cups, or leave them alone. They are of a lower order of thing than I had imagined, and quite incapable of tolerating dispassionate friendliness. From old gentlemen of my character they expect money, and in exchange I may be permitted to take certain grudging liberties with their persons, though in my case this latter generosity would be doubtful. Beyond that there are whole barriers of thought and emotion which the girls and myself are alike incapable of overcoming. On the whole, taking the girls' opinion of me into consideration, my final judgment would be that Annie Mac [Christine] deserves the Victoria Cross. The tongues of her comrades must have cut her vanity like sharp flints. Even Louise, I should say, was surprised that Christine ever lent me even partial encouragement.

At this point it might seem necessary to form a new philosophy, but fortunately I have one ready-made. After all, it does not matter very much whether people like you or not. The important thing is that you should like them. Now the society of young girls is necessary to me, both for my happiness and for my work, and all that Louise's unconscious revelations amount to is that in future I will regard the dear charmers in rather a different light. To know that your companion despises you is rather a powerful weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous fighter like myself, and if I have anything to do with them at all I shall be able to keep them in better order than I was when I was afraid

of hurting their feelings. But it's time we met some new blood. Perhaps Georgey would oblige if the thing were put to him frankly.

Louise has more brains of one sort than all the rest of them put together, and but for Toby, there would be no need for you to look any farther. She respects me, it seems, but does not like me. She wishes you were not married, and, this is subtle of her, she doesn't believe you like her as much as you think you do. You only begin talking of love when you get excited—a very feminine comment !

I kissed her last night—which you may ascribe to cheap claret, maudlin emotionalism, the act of God or anything you please. I doubt, no I do not doubt, whether this was quite fair to you, but I did not fall until the second taxi. It was only a little one ! said the maid-servant.

Tomorrow I meet Raie and Elsie outside the Adelphi Theatre at five o'clock, and if you wish to exhaust your latest thrill, there's your chance ! But my heart is in the coffin with Cynara.

Yours

RICHARD MIDDLETON
Prince of fools.

SPRINGFIELD,
BEACONSFIELD RD.,
ST. ALBANS,
HERTS.,
April 23, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Glad of the news, though my Scotch blood has a natural mistrust of your methods of raising the wind. As you imagined, the letter you forwarded was from my landlady and offensive at that—I hate all these people.

I shall come up from here on Monday morning, back as we all come sooner or later, to the city that can do very well without me. I shall ring you up from the office to let you know. I have finished the Looking-glass poem, but on the whole the week has been sterile though Lord knows I have tried to work. In moments of effort [one learns to do the easy things that people like : Stevenson] . . . one comforts oneself with sad little phrases like that.

So you are dreaming of the fond adventure of the road. But I am not of those who find hunger and cold, the brutality of the police and rheumatic fever adventurous, and these are all you will reap. I have noticed that when a man has no money in his pocket he ceases to be an individual, but becomes an insignificant portion of a very detestable mass, even to himself. It is odd to feel one's manhood slipping away from one by degrees, but it is not adventurous. I ramble this morning.

Yours ever

RICHARD M.

Oh dreamer ! you did not send me my railway fare ! Shall I walk it ?

ST. ALBANS.

No date. Probably April '10.

DEAR HARRY,

In the grey light of next morning my sensitive nature does not regard the notion of Christine surrounded by a lot of rough-cast boys with pleasure, so I think we had better omit that part of Sunday's programme. I shall be at the Bedford Head at half past six unless I hear from you to the contrary. I could however meet you anywhere at a quarter past five if you had an alternative plan and dropped me a line. I have a very pleasant recollection of yesterday, and deem it very necessary that we should meet Miss Pan [the girl of the poems to Irene] again. I purpose writing to Christine, but I have a lot of other letters to write first. Please send me the prospectus of the Poetry Recital Society as it appears in the advertisements of the Thrush (last vol) if you can bring yourself to tear it out !

Yrs ever

RICHARD.

St. Albans,

Friday.

The day of the funeral of Edward the Peacemaker. Owner of three Derby winners.

May 21, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

The author of the "Nineteen Loves of Queen Melanie" received your letter, and was moved thereby to laughter. You know how poets laugh, not boldly like men, nor yet cunningly like women, but somewhere betwixt and between. I laughed like that.

And that is why, I suppose, being smitten by the heat beyond consideration of the amorous Queen aforesaid, I sit down on my bottom, as Pet Marjorie hath it, to write you my news, which does not exist. At St. Albans I form theories of life, such theories as are found by the chicken in the yet unbroken egg, founded on experience and checked by intuition. To theorise on life *ab ovo*, as it were, it is first necessary to be dead. This condition I have fulfilled; the worms already begin to desert me for fresher carrion. . . . I am no longer the *dernier cri* in putrescence. Moreover a carrion crow has picked a hole in the crown of my head, and given me an open mind. The threads of my arguments are patent to the winds of heaven. What then, you ask from your whirlpool of painted infants and philosophical golf, what then oh maggotty poet is life? Life is the period of confused inanity that separates one wisdom from the other, the wisdom of those who have not been born from the wisdom of those who will be born no more. And oh how sweet this inanity is to us while it lasts! Weep for me oh life-flushed young man, for I have lost my bird.

Talking of losses, my sister has lost her cat, which for the last ten years has been all life held for her in the shape of friend, and I pray to heaven that she may never have

another one (a cat, I mean . . . not a friend !) for no human being could have left behind a recollection so completely favourable, so little marred by weaknesses or faults, as that incomparable animal. The mystery that brood over his disappearance adds to the family grief, which doubtless the shade of King Edward takes to himself. Poor man, I hope he has not had to read all the newspapers.

I shall come up to town again on Monday, and see what life holds for me. I have sent poems to the English Review and the Saturday ditto. Also a bad article to the latter which Hodge will return. V.F. remains obdurate Damn her, lewd minx, damn her !

Yours ever

RICHARD M.

. . . .

Frank Harris had left Vanity Fair—or it had left him !—and Middleton was trying to get money owing to him.

ST. ALBANS (*postcard*),

June 8, '10.

Please drop me a card by return to say whether there is or is not an accent on Melisande. Melisande or Mélisande? I am coming to town tomorrow, Thursday, just for the day. Perhaps you will feel like lunching at Lyons or drinking with Charlton.

Yours

R.B.M.

. . . .

Relates to *Mélisande*, a beautiful lyric published in the *English Review* and subsequently in *Poems & Songs*.

St. Albans,

June 10, '10.

DEAR HARRY,

Many thanks for the letter and the shag. The former was interesting in relation to your Amaryllis. I suppose I ought to give you good advice but there. . . . I wish I was in your shoes. I can't do without a girl!

Yesterday I went to Hampstead with the N.B's, a drunken evening though better than I had anticipated. Levy tells me that the man Wilson has definitely accepted my pain poem for the Odd Volume. I suppose you have seen the E.R. By the way I should be glad if you could let me have the typewritten copies of those two poems I gave you as I want them for the great volume which I am now putting together. I have got copies of nearly all the poems out of Vanity Fair. I have written a good doggerel this last week and the first chapter or preface of my autobiography! Otherwise I have a head full of noxious wind, and find it hard to write. It will be a good thing to get the book of verses out though. . . . It will look at all events like something definitely achieved. It rains here all day long and fills the petals of the roses with tears, but even my discontent acknowledges that the trees are beautiful in consequence. If you go to Wimbledon you might give Lovelace sixpence for postage and ask him to send me the third volume of Saintbury's Prosody when it comes back to the library. Tell him I will faithfully return it as soon as I have read it. Having no flappers I am really anxious about that! I suppose my box arrived safely at 45. You did not mention it in your letter, and I would not lose all those books for anything. I have heard nothing from F.H. [Harris] this week. . . . I will write again when I feel more cheerful. The N.B's were quite good last night but I talk too much when I'm drunk.

Yours ever

Richard.

. . . .

Levy was a wine merchant who translated Heine into quite good verse. I speak of him because of a wonderful lunch he gave us once at his City office, from which we emerged not knowing if we stood on our heads or our heels.

Harris was trying to get the poems published in book form, but for all his influence no one would have them. They had to wait until Middleton killed himself before Fisher Unwin jumped at them.

St. Albans,

June 12, '10.

DEAR 'ENRY,

I waited at the Globe till half past seven, in agreeable conversation with the bar-maiden, and then gave you up as a companion of profligates and economiser of telegrams. I dine at Jepson's to-night and sleep at Wimbledon. If you run over in the morning (i.e. Monday morning) you will belike see me. I return here tomorrow night to continue the enrichment of our literature at my leisure. I have had proofs from the English Review.

Yours

Richard.

St. Albans,

June 22, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

The dreamer has become for the moment a man of action, or, to come to earth, I have just given notice to my landlady and propose moving my scant possessions this week. There will be about a packing-case full of books and MS which I hope you will find room for, as I shall not want it in my rural exile.

St. Albans is not a bad place for a man of my tastes in the summer months, though I fear it will not do much for my work. No more girls, Harry ! no more books, or talks or literary journals. I confess that I feel like a man who has failed. Yet, if only for economic reasons it would have been madness to hold out any longer. I am making no money, and without money one cannot be free. Harris is returned and I go to town tomorrow to see him. I shall probably ring you up.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

Refers to his leaving the lodgings at Wimbledon. He was to be living with his parents now until 1911 and residence in Brussels.

St. Albans,

July 25, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letter with its philosophies duly to hand. I dree my weird without much aid from philosophy, whether among the flesh-pots of Frank Harris, or the domestic tyrannies of St. Albans. I am looking forward to my holiday at 45 . . . this place has got on my nerves lately and smitten my singing lips to shamed silence. I want to play the hermit among your books, and forget things for a little. Nowadays I am doing neither wrong nor right, and my heart is choked with the sands of mere existence. I must pay a visit to the Celestial Surgeon.

Austin Harrison has written a decent letter to me demanding articles and short stories for the E.R. so I'm trying to work, but Lord ! my spirit has wings of lead. I shall do an article on the Criticism of Poetry that should annoy a few people, however. I have meant to write it for a long time.

I had a reproachful but amiable letter from Christine. I must try to see her again soon. I am still in her debt I think.

I will write when I'm in better spirits.

Yours

Richard.

45 Lambton Road,

Raynes Park,

No date. August, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

There is no ink here so I write in pencil. I was glad to get your letter but my mind is in a kind of stupor. I can't find the Rotisserie here [Anatole France's novel] but I will have a look again presently. The cat is very well and affectionate, but has an appetite that no efforts of mine can satisfy. I am doing no work and am not very happy. I do not think I shall die a natural death. There are wheels in my head, you see. I took Christine out on Wednesday. She behaved very well and tried to be more than pleasant but I do not love her any more.

I think it is about time that you read Mme. Bovary carefully so I will give it to Joe; also Dobson's Vignettes which are better worth reading than you believe and will go in your pocket. Your father-in-law has a subtly offensive manner that reminds me with wearisome iteration that I am a gentleman. One of these days I shall be a corpse, but I shall make a finer kind of clay than he. Please remember me to the Jepson's; also to Thomas Hardy, William Watson and Cornelius Nepos if they are there.

Yours ever

Richard.

. . . .

He was staying at my house while I was on holiday at Dymchurch. From the cat he obtained that pleasant little essay, *A Distinguished Guest*, which appears in *The Ghost Ship*.

RAYNES PARK,

Aug. 13, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Just a line to tell you that I'm feeling more cheerful. F.H. the incroyable seeks to engage me in les affaires, and I know not how the matter will end. Anyhow behold in me a full-blown director. My verses go to America this week, and my benison goes with them. No. 45 still stands where it did; also the kitten. I've just washed up all the dirty things. It was time.

In haste Yours ever

RICHARD.

RAYNES PARK,

No date. Aug., '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letter has just come and I will try to answer it, though I have forgotten to buy any ink and I hate writing in pencil. I gave Joe a morbid note, which I hereby cancel if I have not retrieved it before he goes. Things like that ought not to be sent to Dymchurch.

And yet willy nilly I am in the morbid key nowadays. You ask me how I am getting on, and my spirit answers, not quite truthfully, that I have been stagnant for seven and twenty years; but the truth is that I'm afraid I'm making rather a muddle of things. St. Albans is all wrong somehow. If I return there for another few months I shall be finished. I shall never emerge from the suffocating shelter of the domestic petticoats again. Raynes Park is wrong in another way. It compels me, as in the past it has compelled you, to indulge in unadventurous adventures, debauches that make my soul vomit instead of decking it with wings, drunken follies that leave my emotions cold. "If something would snap" I say at night; "it hasn't snapped" I say in the morning! Between these points there are nightmares, waking or sleeping.

Yet what do I want? Peace in which to write poems, I have said sometimes, knowing full well that peace is voiceless. Five hundred a year and the domesticities—but I am the least domestic of creatures. Ten thousand a year and all the vices—but by God Harry, I don't believe I'm in the least vicious! There remain suicide or the Church of Rome, but suicide is nearly always ungentlemanly and I'm far too clever for readymade religions. I look at the flesh of my body and marvel. It can't be meaningless. But—Prolong that But through an eternity of nauseated self-criticism, and you have my mood. People dislike me, I reflect, because I dislike myself, nor can I bribe them with grudging sacrifices.

So far my life has been too negative, and I must ever be

reminding myself that somewhere there is a Yea for every Nay. At present I suffer from a kind of inverted philosophy of the moment. One of these days, if I conquer my bloody environment I shall write songs as no one has ever written them. But I am a weakling where intellectual suffering is concerned.

I feel after all this letter is all mere morbidity so I will shut up.

Penguin Isles is at St. Albans I'm sorry to say. I must retrieve it when I get back, and I can't find the Rotisserie anywhere. I shall write when I'm cheerful.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

St. Albans,

Oct. 19, '10.

DEAR HARRY,

I didn't meet F.H. after all on the common but I ran up to town, and collared him at the flat. I am lunching with him, Austin Harrison and other wild-fowl tomorrow, but afterwards I will meet you and Louise; to the better accomplishment of which I will ring you up in the morning. I can't write for cramp.

Yours ever

Richard.

St. Albans,

October 27, '10.

DEAR HARRY,

I have been engaged in composing the queerest love poem that was ever written, for I have embodied in it something of my general views concerning those contaminate drabs whom I dream of night and day, and call in my drunken moments, women. I think you will say when you see it that " To Althea, who loves me not " is a sufficient excuse for not having answered your letter before. Also, there was nothing in your letter to answer, which was written in terms of the vomit that follows debauch. I should like to coin the aphorism that the wise man makes his debauches worthy of his ideals ; by failing there we damn ourselves to insignificant hells, hardly to be endured by ambitious spirits. Your virtues are very tolerable, but your debauches are, to say the least of it, slovenly. You are too apt to take the first debauch that comes to your hand, and yield yourself to its questionable charms. For my part, since poverty has prevented me of late from indulging in those sensual and emotional excesses that alone give me pleasure, I reject all the miserable substitutes that offer themselves to poor men. Least of all am I willing to get drunk in the society of fools. Wine that sometimes gives pleasant variety to wisdom merely exaggerates folly. Drunk or sober this is not to be tolerated.

I go to London on Saturday to have my photograph taken by a Frenchman, and on Sunday I sup at the Jepsons ! My people came back on Saturday which will be a relief, as I have virtuously stayed in doors all the week.

Why don't you turn your mind to the composition of popular articles for the newspapers ? You could do with the money, at a pinch it might provide a way out of your troubles, and the labour would occupy your mind. I emphasize the word popular, for though the things themselves might strike you as worthless, the necessity of concentrating your mind on something clean outside your personality would be of the utmost benefit to your intellect. Try it as you might try gardening or golf. You strike me as a man who has had a surfeit of going his own way.

Yours ever

Richard.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably late '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Poets ought not to back horses, it is asking too much of Providence. What you must do now is to thank your stars that T. didn't win ! I labour at verses, labour being the *mot juste*, and naturally produce nothing. My silly little article is in T.P.'s this week. I think I ought to be ashamed of myself. I must write something better for them now.

I sent an ultimatum to V.F. but nothing came of it. I hardly thought there would. What I am to do for the immediate future God only knows. Afterwards there is T.P.'s and the Saturday I suppose, and perhaps the English Review. But there is plenty of time for me to perish before then, though somehow or other I want to convince these dirty dogs that I am a poet before I go. I begin to realise that this England for which we write is peopled solely by R's and T's and S.H's. It is not success they appreciate but money which is their poor vision of power. Really we ought to be sorry for them rather than impatient.

Girls are dropping out of my life again. I write to none of them and do not even think of them any more. I want to get my ego on paper first ; afterwards we can play.

By the way you forgot to send me P.O. as arranged on Monday last. I don't want to walk back to town, and I shall have to leave this rural quietude soon.

Yours ever

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

ST. ALBANS,

Nov. 4, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Don't write postcards : it's a bad habit anyhow since it leads you to expurgate, and gives postmen and others headaches. I was very glad to get your postcard this morning, as I take it for a sign that you are sticking to your work. But stick to the task of registering your impressions and shun the metaphysical at all costs. The mechanism idea is good but what in God's name is the Will to Know doing in this gallery ? Remember that none of your readers will recognize the craving for knowledge in that outlandish garb, and anyhow it isn't wanted there at all. Stick to your short skirts, and editors will take you to their bosoms. Damn metaphysics this grey day ! also damn editors.

Did you see the comforting words the Morning Post said concerning the deathless singer ?

" If the stanzas of Mr. Richard Middleton and Mr. F. S. Flint do not rise above the mediocre level of magazine verse (on which we have previously animadverted) Mr. Herbert Trench comes to the rescue with six stanzas of real poetry."

What manner of man can write like this ? Partiality might blind me as to the demerits of my own stuff, but nothing can affect the fact that I know that Flint's verses are better than Trench's silly doggerel. I hope that the silly ass who wrote it will live long enough to eat his own words, and that's all I feel about it.

I have had a highly affectionate letter from Annie Macdonald [Christine] and feel mightily drawn to that young woman, who stands after all, for the one tender hour in a sufficiently uncouth life. She is friends with Louise and says they are going north to be in pantomime together, which is, I think, a lie. I hope so anyhow, as I am growing weary of this loveless life, and hope to see something of her when my circumstances permit it.

Stick to work and never neglect to consider the ignorance and shallowness of the people for whom you write.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

St. Albans,

No date. Late '10.

DEAR HARRY,

Just arrived home. I fear that I have been something less than gracious today—pray forgive me—the damned rain was in my bones. At this moment while I write, my father and sister gloat notably over Boswell. I mean to do an article on him.

Now could I come and stop the week-end with you? I should like to very much if you could manage to put me up. I could go to a matinee on Saturday and come down afterwards if that would suit you. I want to come.

Write what you think of this.

Yours ever

Richard

who means well.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Late '10.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for your letter, impregnate as it was with a kind of turbulent philosophy. Such things fall on me like blessed manna in this my exile, where we are all philosophers of the other kind. How I write poems in this island of resigned lotus-eaters I don't know, but I do and not so bad either. My sister is composing a waltz for the Evening News Prize Competition; 'tis a good waltz but I fear she will not win a hundred quid.

I was sorry I could not come for the week-end. I had an article to do on Harris's play and feared the excitements of Raynes Park. The Academy, you may be surprised to hear, were delighted with my Children's Drama article and demand others. The ways of editors are inscrutable! Harris has passed out of my ken, though he repeated his advertisement of me in an article in the Academy. I was in town last Thursday but it rained and I had the pip so I went home early and did not ring you up. I may be up next Thursday or perhaps Saturday and if I am I will communicate with you.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

My fingers are weary with writing this blessed day, but my heart is in the right place!

ST. ALBANS,
Dec. 9, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

I read your letter with genuine interest, and have since devoted some attention to the problem of Henry Savage, his soul. The result of my musings is inchoate, like, the morbid element in, you would say, the soul in question. But it is clear to me that you are wrong when you say that you can accomplish nothing till you have solved your riddles. I am inclined to think that you make a mistake in essaying such personal forms of art. Naturally, every time you happen to write that difficult pronoun "I," you are dumped back on your philosophical, metaphysical prayer-mat. I think you ought to drop your task of self-expression and try to create. Write impersonally, write like Walter Pater, write like the gifted author of Genesis. If you wish you can begin by creating an imaginary author to write your books for you; a foolish person who accepts the arbitrary meanings of words because he knows no better. Let him be as the serpent that stops her ears, if only he gets on with his work.

These be counsels of wisdom, and hot-tempered youth—you have that priceless boon—is impatient of sich, so for the moment I forbear and turn to mundane things.

F.H. has left for Nice. There is a vastly dirty attack on the play by Lang in today's Morning Post. He writes like a soured eunuch. The notice in the Academy is mine, so you see I am booming in that quarter for the moment. I have accepted £2 from V.F. in full settlement of my grievances. The Westminster has refused three little poems of mine. 'Tis a hard world for poets; I have a good mind to advertise for an editor with an ear for music in verse! I have no illusions, no hopes and no regrets. I am ready for Death when Death is ready for me. I am a grain of dust; I am also, by the way, the world.

I shall be delighted to spend Christmas with you. To-morrow I may be in town if my sister is returned from her political mission to Farnham, in which case I shall ring you up.

RICHARD.

ST. ALBANS,

Dec. 10, '10.

DEAR HENRY,

This is merely a line from the most fatigued of correspondents to tell you that I am looking forward to Christmas. Jepson asked me to come on Christmas evening but I have written declining, so I hope there is no obstacle in the way of our seasonable carouse. Nothing in the last Academy, and the P.M.G. sent back the second article that I sent them. Still I have hopes for the future, and that's something. Yesterday I took my sister and a Dutchman to lunch at the Florence and afterwards we went to the Chocolate Soldier. Good music, good singing, silly adaptation of Shaw's play. Well? says you. Quite so, I replies. I shall be in town on Thursday and will ring you up.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Late 1910.

DEAR HARRY,

I suppose I ought to apologize for deserting you the other night but I'm not sure. On the whole I think I was sufficiently drunk to justify my acting in accordance with my wishes and especially my *fears*. My sober mind however condemns me, so Richard sober apologizes while Richard drunk is impenitent. There !

I lunched with Randall, and found him a decent mild-mannered little man who wears glasses and impressed me very pleasantly. I am to meet him again after Christmas and meet some minor poets ; surely some good may come of this ! In the evening I sought out Lily Randall, being still mildly elated, and took her and another girl to the Islington Empire. Then home having spent £3 14. 4. on my little week-end trip, but I feel much better of soul for it and acknowledge no regrets. That evening at the flat was one of the finest I have ever had in my life. I am really grateful to you for giving it to me.

By the way, I left my half-written article in a copy of the Academy on your hall table. Please send it along as I have the work fever on me, and it comes all too rarely. Also I left four books in the library that I should like to have sooner or later. Sorry to trouble you for the consequences of my sins. I don't know whether I shall have pluck enough to face your wife at Christmas. There my conscience does stab me, for she has been really decent to me for a long while past . . . and it was abominably rude of me to clear off like that.

I shall do an article on Phil though I shall not mention his name. Today I have done one on Literature and Burglars for a clamorous Academy. The editor has promised me special terms for my contributions and that of his own accord ! What think you ?

There, there, forgive me, and your wife must forgive me too.

Lele, lele, lele, pap, pap, pap.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

" Randall " was Wilfred Randall of the *Academy* staff ; " Phil," Phil Ray, the comedian, famous in his day and still remembered perhaps by music-hall audiences. We spent much time with him in dissipation.

ST. ALBANS,

January 20, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

I got back safely last night after my jolly little holiday. In the evening I went to the Euston and saw Louise in Songland. She asked me to tell you to come and see her this week if you could as she may not appear in town again (There's a matinee on Saturday, but anyhow I suppose you are serving other gods !) She looks very pretty on the stage and very neat off. My cat article appeared in the Evening Standard for Dec. 27th, so my list of possible papers enlarges. Hurray ! I don't suppose I shall be in town before Thursday if laudanum can aid me to live the quiet life. I hope you are either bearing up or settling down.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Christine sends me a little sad note full of violets. I shall write her something nice tomorrow. Louise, by the way, moves today, and I don't know her new address. This to save you wiring to her.

I wish I was a millionaire ! Why ? Because money helps us to grow weary of our follies. R.B.M.

ST. ALBANS,

At the sign of the devoted lover,

Feb. 8, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

I shall be delighted to come on Saturday, though I know that the fierce delights of Raynes Park are not wholesome fare for such as me. All my life long I shall be very poor, and it is not good for me to sit in the stalls and make eyes at young females in tights. It sends me gadding to the Lane and such-like places, when I had better spend my farthings on paying my debts. There is another reason why I should not visit you. Once I really did believe that in my company you were secure from the lowest deeps of alcoholic intoxication and general profligacy. Now I realise that given the opportunity I am no better than you, and that I am therefore the weakest of good influences, and by no means worthy to look your wife in the face at breakfast time.

I shall come therefore with only too much pleasure and seize my hours of vicious enjoyment with only an excess of eagerness. On Saturday I went to George Wilson's. Christine importunes me by every post. There are other things in my mind that I will not mention.

You didn't say what time I was to come? Will it suit you if I go to a matinee and come down after that, or shall I come earlier? Say the word by return of post.

I remain therefore till Saturday,

Once an apple-cheeked dear lad,

now your confrere in vice and misery,

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably early 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letters interested me, though I don't know that they call for much comment. Time is your true solver of problems, and somehow I feel intuitively that six months hence you will be doing . . . very much what you are now, granting small changes in your material environment. Frankly, if I were in your place, I should postpone the practical exploitation of the dream called Brussels as long as possible, because the world, i.e. life, has a rough way with dreamers when they change their fairy gold for earthly coppers. I know that your mind likes to take shelter in this particular dream, but in truth I think that's all it's fit for. I am game for Brussels whenever you like, but I hope for your sake that you will never wish it.

Personally I am still half dead and of no use to myself or anybody else. Ergo I have very little news. The Odd Volume has refused my Pain poem on the score of its morality. I have sent the book to Wilson who purports sending it to John Lane who is a friend of his. I shouldn't think the canny John would care for such perilous stuff. I have had a rebuking letter from Frank. I shall have to see him some day next week, probably Thursday, and will ring you up when in town. I can think of nothing coherently these days. Girls or work or money or anything else. I have a tormented soul and a torpid mind, and the pen-holder of my sister which boasts an indifferent nib. With which I have written this hasty scrawl to catch the midnight post.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Oh mon roi !

ST. ALBANS,

Feb. 7, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

I was sorry to leave you so abruptly today, but on reflection it seemed to me that stopping on, when Mrs. Savage obviously did not wish me to do so, was not quite a decent thing to do. So I cleared off back to St. Albans in time for dinner, and am once more contemplating work. I should have felt more remorse had I not realised that your hands are likely to be pretty full for the next day or two, without your having a guest, who is moreover a poet, to look after ! It was only the manner of my going that was regrettable but we are not a family that encourages lateness at meals, so that I could not wait for your return. I rang you up from St. Pancras but you were not there.

Well, we must dree our weirds, you and I. I am very very tired ; you would be happier if you were more tired. If you were we could go to Brussels together as I think I could rely on the Academy for a quid or so a week now, even if I was out of England. As it is we must go our own way.

I contemplate a bust at the end of this week and will very likely communicate with you. Perhaps I will stop a night or two at the Tavistock, just as I did last time. After the bust God knows what I will do. I don't want to wait another month before letting myself go !

I hope your liaisons prosper oh Pierrot of the moment. I have a heart of ice. But I did enjoy last Saturday night and I thank you for that.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Do you realise we sat up till 3.30 last night without a drink ?

St. Albans,

Feb. 9, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Your telegram to hand, and contents digested. I am ready to go as you doubtless anticipate—your judicious poet always has his barque on the shore and his mooring-ropes are but cobwebs. If I may make a suggestion it is that you should secure all the money possible to give the firm a good send off. I have not had my cheque yet, fortunately enough, but it should amount to £10 when it comes (this week-end for sure !) I must pay about a quid in small debts however ; so that I will not be over-weighted for the great adventure.

I will not say more now but will write tomorrow when you will doubtless have written details to me and I shall know where we are. Personally I think such a scheme if soberly carried out may save your soul alive. Mine I have doubts about, but anyhow it can't do either of us any harm.

But above all things we have got to be practical.

Yours ever

Richard

the boat-steerer.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably Feb. '11.

DEAR HENRY,

As you will perhaps have gathered from chance rumours from the lips of your wife or the immortal Felix Bertrand there is still a certain Richard Middleton to be reckoned with—R.M. of the gilded youth—R.M. the lecherous—R.M. the crapulous—R.M. the revivifier of old dreams. In this connection I recall a sound aphorism of Heine's: "the acts of a genius, like those of a drunkard, lie outside all reckoning." You may call me which you will, I have my own ideas on the point. But when you bade me keep my money for a possible trip to Brussels you under-rated the strength of my desires. I had waited for a month till my heart and the little veins of my head were like to burst with congested blood, so I could wait no longer. In a subtle way your letter contributed to my mood, because you were not just to me when you accused me of wanting to go on the bust in Brussels—I never thought of or suggested such a thing. Were you not rather expressing a secret fear as to a possible calamity that might wreck our enterprise? But the form your criticism took reminded me that there is something between us that there was not of old. Echoes of days and nights when we haven't been loyal to one another—of moments of disagreement that were not merely intellectually bitter. And I wondered how we could ever endure the first trying weeks of a new life without quarreling, now that there is only an imperfect understanding between us. I hasten to add that this depression resulting from your letter was only a small factor, but it may have turned the scales of my mind between coming with you to Brussels and kissing my girl on the lips. Then there was a phrase of Stevenson's as to the virtues of action. You know how these things help us to do what we want.

Well now to be practical. I certainly think you ought to go to Brussels. The more I have seen of Raynes Park lately, the more I have realised that it was not possible

for anyone to conquer such an environment. It has even overwhelmed me to a certain extent though the fact that my visits there were only occasional have saved me from utter defeat. Nevertheless spiritually I spent the latter half of last night at Raynes Park. I see no possible chance of your ever being anything or doing anything if you stay in that damned place. It has made even your wife cynical, which lingers in my mind as something miraculous. Incidentally I really believe that your leaving home for a time will be the best thing for the domesticities. . . .

There are arguments for and against your going alone; in some strange way you seem to have far more individuality than you used to have and you should therefore be the less dependent on other people for companionship. Solitude is a scourge for the back of any sane man, and when accompanied by poverty, even relative poverty, constitutes hell as far as it can be conceived. But I'm not sure this isn't what you really pine for. . . . How would it be if you went to Brussels on your own and I followed in about three weeks' time when I shall get my next cheque? (I learn that they pay by the lunar month!). By that time you would have settled down and have forgotten Raynes Park and its works. But these things cannot be discussed in letters. I shall be in town tomorrow and will ring you up. Perhaps you could slip up for an hour and have a chat and we could resolve problems. In any case I shall lunch with the men at Lyon's.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

I reopen this letter to remark that having a fearsome cold in the head coupled with an 'acking coff, I shall not come up tomorrow after all. Tuesday, being Valentine's day, is also my girl's birthday, and I have promised to take her out. But I shall ring you up on Tuesday morning, to give you an honest chance of calling me names. Meanwhile, having reread my letter dispassionately I realise that I have expressed myself badly, and that it is no more

sympathetic than yours was. I daresay the good God, judging between his chuckles, will find that there is not much to choose between us. But you have had greater opportunities, and have therefore achieved greater suffering. My next cheque is due on March 4 so after all you will not have long to wait for your libidinous confrere ! if you decide to set out alone on your travels. Be sure I shall not fail you then, however hungry my lips, however exalted my staff !

I am sick and heavy with cold and can only vouch for the excellence of my motives and a complete absence of proper remorse.

RICHARD
the last of the Satyrs.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably late March, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for the letter and the mandat, just arrived. I was glad to hear that things had gone on the whole, well. The Academy was vexing but after all they have treated me very well lately, and I have had a letter from Miss Goldsmith which leads me to hope that it will not happen often. If it lay only with her I'm sure I should be in every week. If my article is in next Saturday I should be able to scramble through the month somehow, lacking follies.

Since writing the above, Sunday has arrived and I perceive that poets will never lack folly. The good Jean leaves today for the ancestral home, and stirred by this disaster I made propositions to her and extorted the confession that it was only a question of money. Then to my astonishment, for I already think like a Belgian in these matters, I discovered that ten francs was not enough, and so relinquished my fell design. But my blood was warmed by my half hour of amorous intercourse and when I met that little bitch Julia, I fell an easy victim. She is what one might call a —— prostitute ; and she is worth nothing. Also I believe she is in the family way, which is not nice. I told her off finally but I always do that. Today I write sad little epigrams in a red pocket book. Toad's last sad little song [a reference to Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*]. The last sad song that is the first ; and I have got the notion of a fine short story. Certainly this place is good for work, though my other story halts a little at the seventh page. I am going to do big things, my head is swarming with ideas. "The Remarkable Experience of Harold Sturgess." And what happens to him you ask. My Lord ! I dare not tell you—it's too simple. But as far as I know, new. Something new and simple—like Bart Kennedy I gloat.

I see much of Blieck [Torcy] and Leon. And that is why, to avoid embarrassments, I think it would be nice of

you to send me a new postal order for ten shillings. My cheque should come next week-end, and this time I will send it you to cash as there are reasons for not sending it to St. Albans. Then you can repay yourself the ten bob as I know money must be scarce. I find I can cash a P.O. for a small amount but there must be no names on it. If you don't like shoving the cheque through the R.P.H. [Raynes Park Hotel] I suppose Abrams or someone will cash it for you. My mind wanders a little—I am going to start my new story.

Please tell your wife that one of her postcards will be a very agreeable ornament for my mantelpiece. Leon has called to take me to the cinema so the story is postponed, but that's always a good thing I believe. Enthusiasm is good to create but hard to express.

In future I am going to be very *sage* (? wise).

Yours ever

RICHARD.

See the Morning Post on the first and find out what the swine says of my poem in the E.R. !

. . . .

The story mentioned was either never written or was lost. As to the " good Jean " and subsequent *femmes de chambres* and others, it is necessary to say here that the Brussels correspondence is very outspoken, and I have had to give thought to the question of its publication. I print it without bowdlerising for several reasons. Chiefly, it is a matter of faith not only with myself that Middleton is a true poet whose work will live while English poetry lives. Posterity, therefore, will be interested in him and, as I believe, will note as childishness and vanity our fear of truth in hiding anything about men after their death. Again, the letters reveal further matter which is helpful towards an understanding of him. His life was a tragedy, and such tragedies will continue while we are merely shocked by them, or accept them more or less as a matter of course, and go on with our childish game of idealising men instead of seeking to see them as they are.

10 Rue de Joncker,

Brussels,

April 4, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for your letter. I would have written before, but I was automatically waiting for the Academy cheque, being thrifty of twopence-halfpennies. However as it hasn't come I won't wait. I have plenty of money to get on with.

After all I liked Melanie well enough in print. You needn't bother about notices—they will be more interesting next month when my story appears—it was only that Morning Post dog who angered me to curiosity. Harris amused me too with his Christ and his stomach pump—on the whole he thinks the stomach pump is more important, and treats it therefore at greater length. Stephen Phillips was pretty bad, wasn't he?

I'm glad to hear that you are being virtuous for I am inclined that way myself. You did not say whether the New Bohemians won any new members from the New Age—bright young lads who eat dog-biscuits and the like. Some ought to be pretty good, but one generally has to make reservations when it is a question of artists, i.e. gents who draw and paint. Their education limits itself to the colour and shape of things very often.

For myself I continue and am pretty satisfied with the work. My life is settling down into grooves. Billiards and literature with Max [Abel Torcy, the Belgian novelist], quiet evenings and the cinematograph with Leon [an architect, my cousin]. I have not been down to the Boulevards for nearly a fortnight! The new femme de chambre sleeps with me pretty regularly, and satisfies that side of my nature. She is not too good-looking but she has a nice little body and gives herself for love. Having a French mother she has bitten my shoulders black and blue, but that amuses her more than it hurts me. 'Tis a domestic business and makes for tranquility rather than poetry.

One *mot* of hers lingers, however. "You must not put me in the family way or Pierre will be jealous!"—Pierre being a formal suitor for her hand. Jealous strikes me as good.

I am going to give Dreams and Illusions to the Academy as soon as they are fed up with the Belgian articles; the sixth is good by the way: an honest artist's apology for being a bad journalist. If I had a hundred and fifty a year of my own I would live here for ever and write works of genius. As it is I think I am doing pretty well, and if the girl stops on I will have no excuse for spending money. It is not sexual fatigue that makes me write so badly today, but cold fingers. It is snowing this morning in the Rue de Joncker at Brussels, a place of which one of these days I will say that there I spent some of the happiest months of my life.

I will write again when the cheque comes. Max has lent me two good French books, "Le Faim" from the Norwegian, and another of which I forget the name for the moment, which is a little epic of syphilis and prostitution.

"My great task of happiness" is become almost a pleasure.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Mrs. Savage has not yet sent me her photograph!

* * * *

"Melanie" is a reference to the beautiful poem, *Queen Melanie and the Wood-Boy*, published in *Poems & Songs*.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably April, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for the money and the letter. The extra quid will carry me on well till cheque-time, unless I make an idiot of myself. In which case I must dree my weird. I gather from your letter that things are less uncomfortable than you expected but hardly less unsatisfactory. I suppose Time will solve these problems as it solves others. It is idle for me to indulge my fancy for practical speculation here. Wait and see is the motto of all dreamers.

I am having a placid time. I had a French lesson and drank too much Gueuze Lambic with Blieck on Monday and today I have been with Leon to La Hulpe. The work continues; after a frightful struggle my new story is well under weigh. I started it four times, an extraordinary feat for me. Blieck lent me half a dozen books including some astonishing De Maupassant. He was a big one if you like—though here and there I detect little holes in his work. I was sure you would find The White Peacock good when you got into it. I would like to read twenty books like that every year.

Be sure and let me know the moment you make up your mind to come out again, as I shall have to arrange with my sister to send out a box by you. My poems seem to have frightened A.H. into silence. I don't blame him. There is an ugliness about most of them to scare any editor. I hope to have good news from you soon.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably early April, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

I have just finished one of my Dreams and Illusions which for the moment gives me the illusion that it is wonderful, and as I am too uplifted to work, your letter's arrival supplies me with a pretext for idleness. Many thanks for the supplementary estimate which in the continued absence of the Academy cheque is decidedly welcome, though I am living a godly and domestic life. Three or four times a day I do my duty like a newly-married man, and to you English perverts I would say :

Qu'as-tu fait O toi que voila,
Baisant les tettes,
Dis ; qu'as-tu fait, toi que voila
De ta clarinette ?

A French verse of which I am honestly proud. As a matter of fact I fear my domestic idyll will soon be shattered, for Madame is suspicious, and as she herself has made amorous overtures to me I am afraid she will tolerate no rivals. If I take Madame on, I will send you a wire ; the circumstance will condone the extravagance.

Max has taken me—metaphorically—to his bosom, and I have acquired a real liking for Gueuze Lambic and will soon beat him regularly at billiards. I read his new novel in manuscript and make suggestions ; it's really uncommonly good as far as I've gone. Mrs. Max finds me an evil influence on her husband I should say. I find the Bochoms menage a little sad. I think it is Emma who thinks nobly of the soul—Leon is in reality a little cunning, a little—it is in his blood—bourgeois. They are both very nice to me.

And here, before I forget it, I will note that Mrs. Max Blieck wants a box of *powder* for cleaning *brown* suede boots, as supplied by an enthusiastic staff of——. Being a woman she says that she will send you the money when

she receives the stuff. Max is an idiot not to punch her head, but as she has made me responsible for the powder, it would be kind of Mrs. Savage to supply the necessary information. Unless this letter happens to arrive at breakfast time I expect you will forget all about it! Also Leon asks me to tell you that he has received the money and that nothing but pressure of business has prevented him from acknowledging it.

Friday.

I am keeping this letter back for the cheque. Having now plenty of empty tins I have today bought seventeen ounces of Belgian tobacco for 1/3 and laid it in bond for the bad days. I have started the Blind Boy story which I am going to do on the big scale for the English Review. The *patron* at our cafe gave me a cigarette this afternoon—I shall soon be an *homme connu* at Brussels! Harris playing with Maupassant's syphilis is an interesting and amusing spectacle. What do you think of me as a bulwark of monarchies? My next article is much better.

Saturday.

Still no cheque but your letter which was very interesting. I must register a protest however against your choice of newspaper cuttings. Why should I be interested in perverse little girls? For your criticism I would remark that as time goes on I labour more and more over the style of my articles and stories. . . . I think it is the reaction that makes me a little slipshod in letters. The news about the Bohemians pleased me for your sake and Garland's, for you are both men to whom such a Society should mean much. I should not have any morbid fear of becoming too popular if I were you. Individualities are never popular for more than five minutes. But the N.B's is definitely a thing apart from the tavern and Phil Ray and the gently-swanking M.—whose character reminds me forcibly of E.D.—and is on that account to be cultivated.

As for M. you ought to beware of a woman who serves to comfort your vanity. Women only begin to be useful to us when they hurt us. I use my girl merely as a drain—very good for my health. When she talks of love, which she does frequently, or when she sings me the sad love songs of France, I yawn profoundly. On the whole, I believe she considers my attitude manly, and dreaming between my efforts, I realise that I have achieved the ideal romance. I hope Pierre has not got the syphilis, because it would kill me before my time. I have got some rare good things to write and I believe that now I am nearly big enough to write them.

I am thinking these days that perhaps after all the short story will prove to be my form.

Sunday.

Still no cheque and no proof of No. 6. I have dark thoughts of letters lost in the post. Yesterday I went to a little review of soldiers, and in the evening to Max's where there was a novelist called Glesener who doesn't seem bad. He was the friend who stopped with Max at Wimbledon. I see Max two or three times a week—Leon more rarely. I am a little afraid of the Bochoms. I went round there the other night and Emma was suffering frightfully from constipation. She told me all about it at wearisome length. After awhile Leon went upstairs with an enema and a bottle of glycerine to operate. I heard Emma screaming like mad, and Leon came down very angry and told me never to get married. The domesticities with a vengeance! I am supposed to call there this afternoon but these things make one pause. I think a walk in the Bois where the anemones grow may be more attractive.

At this moment comes a belated postman who brings proofs from the English Review and the Academy, and a letter from H.S. The Drama of Youth reads gorgeously in print—it seems to me to be the biggest thing I've done. The Academy writes an amiable letter, praising Melanie, but sends no cheque so I will hint delicately in my reply

that poets on their holidays cannot be too rich. I take back all I said about cuttings; the last batch was really interesting—especially the Stevenson. But your letter to my mind marks a fall from grace. You have returned to your intellectual pleasures, after promising to work. You must make an effort young Nietzshaw and win free from your ideas as to cat and dogmas. The joke is unworthy but I propose to post this, as the cheque will not come till Tuesday now.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably early April, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

As the hasty composition of the Poet's Bread and Cheese No. 7 has exhausted me for work and as even the pleasure of re-reading the " Drama of Youth " in print palls after a time, I will start another letter to the sage of Raynes Park. No. 7 aforesaid contains some good criticism of Eekhoud his work, but 'twas quickly written, because I would not start it until I had heard from the Academy.

Last night was a heavy night of love, rendered subtle by the lady's lamentations for lost Pierre, who had not turned up although it was her Sunday off. After I had performed my first *coup* with great success she fell on my bosom, called Pierre once or twice in a sorrowful voice and burst into tears. As in spite of her sorrow the lady induced me to perform five times in the course of the night, I suspect that Pierre is a myth, an ideal, a kind of King Cynarus by whom she measures her real lovers. If so I fancy I was a success, for fired by Gueuze Lambic, which seems to me a notable aphrodisiac, I reduced the lady to absolute inanition at the end, and my final effort had some of the charms of a rape. My life at present reminds me of certain moments in my innocent youth when I approached these things with the enthusiasm of a novice.

Tuesday.

But the following day when I take up my narrative, I feel a mild disgust. Your word " cloaca " is the *mot juste* for the lady, and my reaction is strengthened by the child Adolphine, who has just recited a poem of Beranger's to me.

> Peuple ! formez-vous des innocentes alliances,
> Et donnez-vous la main.

I write by ear ; but under the glamour of Madame's questioning eye, I say that there are better dreams.

This morning's post brought a long letter from Wilfred

Randall praising Melanie (" your poem in the E.R. is a sheer delight ") which did me good, as he knows something about poetry. This afternoon Max read the Drama of Youth and there's no doubt as to its success with him. I clutch at these things a little because I re-read some of my recent work this morning and didn't like it. There is no end to the apprenticeship in this damned trade—there's the devil of a lot of truth in Zola's " Oeuvre," which is the most disheartening book that anyone ever wrote. The clearer your vision, the more certain it is that you will never do anything permanently satisfactory to yourself. Randall is sending me Stevenson's " Lay Morals " to review so you will know the notice is mine when it appears. I think he has but a little soul, but it seems to be made of very nice stuff.

And now here's your letter which for the most part answers mine.

My line " De ta clarinette " scans quite well if you emphasize ta and nette as a Frenchman would.

De *tā* clăr*inēttе*. (Max says it scans).

The habit of hasty criticism is to be deprecated.

Of course you are quite right about dreeing your weird, but you must be quite sure that it is your weird that you dree. It seems to me that the road of mental speculation is always the easiest for you, and on that account to be regarded with suspicion. I shall say no more now because it is not possible to debate such things in letters. The quick give and take of conversation is hardly speedy enough for such fleeting and abstract matters. Meanwhile there is no harm in cultivating the cheerful aspect of such speculations.

Frank Harris, who writes to me no longer, is surely Casanova redivivus.

The business of Tom, which in no wise surprises me, will have been settled one way or the other before you get this letter.

Mrs. Blieck I shall not see till Thursday when I will procure further details. I await Mrs. Savage's letter expectantly.

Saturday.

And here's a letter that has not been posted because of the mysterious non-arrival of my cheque. As it has evidently not gone astray, for the Academy acknowledges the letter in which I suggested that possibility, I must suppose either that Cowper is ill or else that the banking account has run dry for the moment. In any case they are good for the money, so the embarrassment is only temporary. Max lent me twenty francs of his own accord last week, but though that relieved Mafeking, it did not settle the problem of the rent which was nearly a fortnight overdue. Hence, after much hesitation, my telegram of this morning. I must thank you for an astonishingly prompt reply. I telegraphed at eleven and got the money at two. The cheque must come next week and then you can repay yourself.

It is too bad that I should have this worry now for I am working well and spending hardly any money, and this sort of thing puts me out of my stride. I shall do all right now though till the cheque comes.

I have the proof of No. 7 which is a bad one, and am writing an astonishing No. 8. You will like it because it's so modest. I have had a letter from Christine who is in Switzerland with Addie Wells! She sends me a pipe, which my practical sister has not troubled to forward.

I enclose the pattern for Mrs. Blieck.

I feel this is a rotten letter, but I must acknowledge the money, so I cannot stay to improve it. I hope you have settled things with Tom.

I will start a better letter tomorrow!

Yours ever

RICHARD.

* * * *

Eekhoud is the Belgian novelist, Georges Eekhoud, who died a few years ago. We had great times with him in Brussels, where he earned a small stipend as lecturer to the University. He made

little or nothing out of novels which have now a European reputation.

Gueuze Lambic is a very powerful kind of old ale.

The numbered articles to which he refers were entitled *The Poet's Holiday*. I disinterred one or two of the best from the *Academy* for his prose books.

BRUSSELS,

Friday 28. 4. 11.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for your letter and the Postal Order which replenished the tobacco stores, sadly depleted. For frcs. 1.50 I buy half a kilogramme, or eighteen ounces of Appleterre, which is a Belgian tobacco much better for pipes than Semois. I store this up in Waverley Mixture tins and regard the result with simple pride. I still live in our palatial room, and as I think a change of environment is good for artists, I write at all the different tables in turn. On the same principle I try experiments with different kinds of paper and penholders, and if I only had the necessary dexterity I could write a fine article with my toes.

The Academy have sent me Benson's book on Ruskin, and "Contemporary Belgian Poetry" in the Canterbury Poets. The former is mere Benson, but if you want a thrill for a shilling I advise you to procure the latter book. The translator is an ass like all translators of lyric poetry, but at least he has not tried to spare our blushes; and the poems of Paul Gerardy, of Iwan Gilkin, and of Verhaeren made a Puritan-bound poet of England sick with envy. Read "Evil Love" by the first-named, and Giraud's "Florise" and "Mushrooms" by Georges Ramaekers. I should think Verhaeren has said all you feel about Flemish art, but I have doubts as to the greatness of his poetry qua poetry.

I think I have done a pretty good article on Stevenson, though I shall return to the charge when the letters are published. He's an elusive person to write about which makes it interesting.

The book is quite simply

The Autobiography of a Young Man.

Sections 1, 2, 3. My childhood compiled from articles already written for different papers.

Section 4. The Drama of Youth.

Section 5. The New Boy (half written) and

Section 6. The Choice of a career wholly conceived, will deal with my life and development at school.

Section 7. The office, which nobody has done properly before. After that, three of four sections of Blackfriars, Raynes Park, St. Albans, doing the life of an artist from within, and a final section at Brussels with philosophies on the whole business and a prophecy of my new birth. And of course there will be a *Preface*!

Here's a book I think I can write and I mean to take my time over it, and make it as good as the Drama of Youth, which *is* good whatever the damned critics are saying. Two or three of the sections at least should do for Harrison if he cares to have them, as they will all be more or less complete in themselves, but the artist business done quite frankly will be great fun anyhow. Love I mean to leave out altogether if I possibly can, because I won't accept their damned convention. It has helped me to make a mess of things sometimes but I don't know that it has had any great spiritual influence on my life. I shall find out as I go whether it is possible to ignore it. It will make the book stronger if I can. Although I myself am to be the only villain of the piece, I shall curl up the bourgeois somewhere in it. We must all do that when we have a chance.

Your letter has just arrived with the Academy. In your letter I found enclosed a very good poem. It is really good in spite of the last two lines which you must alter. The assonance—it is really unconscious rhyming—of weeping and seeking, and other, brother and lover, you must have passed in a dream! Also they contain a quite unnecessary echo of Swinburne. But the rest of the poem is first-rate, much the best love poem I have seen of yours. Go on and prosper, but don't pay too heavily for your lyrics, young man.

The rest of your letter was concerned with my business, for your trouble wherein I thank you. Next month's

cheque which ought to come next week should be £8. 10/- which is distinctly better and will allow me to repay £2 to you without inconvenience, as I really am learning to be moderately economical. I bet Poet's Holiday No. 8 surprised you. No. 9 is rather good too, I believe.

Don't forget to look out for notices of the English Review. Send me bad ones as well as good ones, for they may be useful to me for the preface of the book, in dealing with possible criticism. The Morning Post is the important one. The weekly reviews will probably do it at the end of next week.

I feel happy tonight; I hope you too will be feeling happy tomorrow night when this should reach you.

Max tells me on a postcard that he has had your letter.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

The Autobiography of a Young Man was never completed. Fragments of it appear in *The Day Before Yesterday* and *The Ghost Ship*.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably April, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letter was welcome, though I found its purport sad. I do not know how I should justify my present opinion as to you and your life ; if you like you may call it an intuition. But I feel sure that your duty at present is to deny your nature, and to try no more to glut it with sweet dishes. You have been chasing D.W's now for about three years, and you yourself would not deny that you are if anything poorer in spirit and wisdom of life than you were when you started. I am more and more convinced that work is the only hope of salvation for us both, and that the longer we postpone our effort, the harder it will be to win at last. Remember that in the gratification of our senses we are one with T. and R. and all the beasts that will not perish ; it is only our desire to create beautiful things that raises us above the people we despise. I have not mastered my desires—I doubt whether I will ever wholly master them, but I am getting them under some sort of control, and you must do the same if you do not wish to find at the end that the kingdom of Raynes Park is within you. I believe that some artists—artists with an ascetic nature, perhaps—find themselves in sexual emotionalism, but I am sure that it is fatal for men like you and me whose ultimate flesh is lustful. If we wish to find ourselves we must go by the hard way, nor will it help us to conceal our distaste for self-denial under the semblance of some cheaply fatalistic philosophy. Without wishing to arrogate to myself the functions of the Deity I am prepared to assert that neither you nor I were fated to be animals of a curiously perverse sensuality. Damn it all, we must work !

Here, you will say, is a precious fine sort of sermon from a man who sleeps with his femme-de-chambre, but there is a distinction which you must recognize. I never think of Margot when I am not actually on her belly, and a few hours a week is all she asks of me. But these D.W's

demand every hour of our existence, and we give it them as a right. I would not accept a page and a half of amorous verse as a refutation of this fact, or as a proof that you have been working. Remembering what work is you must recognize that this is just.

As for me I fear that my splendid card-palace is falling to the ground through no fault of mine. The Academy cheque, now three weeks' late, has not arrived, nor have I had any explanation of the horrid phenomenon. I have only two theories to offer: one is that for the moment they have run out of cash, the other is that possibly my paramour steals my letters, but I do not think this last very likely, though she might conceal them if she thought they were from her rivals, the girls of England. I suppose that the first solution is the right one and though that means that in the long last I shall probably get my money, it also means that my dream here is over. It is bad luck that the blow should fall so soon, for I am on the track of a thumping good book, and in a month or so the English Review would have come to the rescue. But we are really justified in crediting Fate with these things that we cannot help, and I suppose the high gods do not wish me to be happy for long at a time. I have not yet made up my mind to any definite course of action, but I'm sure Max will lend me the money to come home, and I think Madame, who is a good sort, I find, would trust me to send on the rent from England. Of course it's quite likely the cheque will come in the next few days and then I'll laugh at my worries. But by next Saturday they will owe me two monchs, thirteen pounds at least—and I feel in my bones that something is wrong.

Well, if I decide to come back I will let you know. Meanwhile fear the devil and get back to your work.

Yours ever

RICHARD R. & I.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably early May, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Letter-writing should be a business of mood, purely, and to-night I am in the mood to write you a letter, which does not necessarily mean that I have anything in particular to say. The E.R. masterpieces seem to have fallen pretty flat, and the Academy politely intimated that ten Poet's Holidays are enough and will I please suggest a new series. Never mind, the time will come! I shall send the Academy my Dreams and Illusions, but I fear they are quite out of their reach. If only I could write for a paper that loved me, for taking them altogether I believe that the Academy articles have been pretty good. Perhaps my eloquence concerning newspapers in No. 10 cooked my goose. But they are amiable folk, and evidently do not mean to drop me, so things might be much worse in a practical sense.

Christine writes affectionate letters and has sent me a wonderful photograph from Switzerland. It makes her very much the sort of girl she would like to be. It would be kindly of you to drop her a line when you have an idle moment. Kursaal Theatre, Lausanne, Suisse, is her address. She occupies a quite historic place in my life now, and when I feel the need for *pantoufles* I might do worse than marry her.

Your last letter chiefly rebuked me in your downright lover's fashion for under-estimating the importance of love. Now that I am divorced from my domesticities I shall perhaps begin to search once more for the grand passion. The reason for my new-won freedom is pathological, the lady having given me a noble dose of Hale's disease, after five weeks' continuous copulation. It is curious that I should have escaped so long, for it develops in a week, but I can now account for certain odd little modesties that did not seem to be a part of her character. It occurs to me that it is perhaps fortunate that you went home when you did, for she is a good bed-lass. When I made the fatal

discovery I went out and bought some capsules and a new pipe, the head of Cleo de Merode in porcelain. The capsules for my body, the pipe for my heart. I wish you could see it, it holds an enormous amount of tobacco, and pulls my front teeth out when I smoke it. My indisposition will give Max a certain amount of pleasure, for he had gazed on the countenance of my lady and found her sufficiently fair.

Tuesday.

And here's your letter to remind me that mine is still unfinished. I thought the Belgian Poets would surprise you, and am now meditating my article on the subject. Between ourselves, Max doesn't know very much about them, as poetry is not his mark, but he gave me the current evaluation of them. He has not got the ones you would want, and an examination of the second-hand bookshops makes me fear that it would be necessary to pay fcs. 3.50 for most of them. Gilkin is better known as a literary dramatist than as a poet. I heard Eekhoud lecture on one of his plays, a Russian Nihilist thing, that didn't impress me specially.

Tonight I take Madame and the two children to the circus. The other day was the little boy's first communion and I was invited to the family gathering in celebration, and drank a vast quantity of liquor in the society of some thirty good bourgeois. The company of a really interesting flapper with enormous eyes made the evening mildly memorable. I pressed her hand for five minutes at parting, but have not seen her since.

The work progresses though not too fast. I have written a little mock-Maeterlinckian thing which is good I think. I will send it you when I have copied it out.

The malady is not going to be at all troublesome I think. The lady proclaims her innocence, and Max says it may be due to the violence of my rabbitry, as you call it. But in any case the result's the same, and I am momentarily deprived of beer, pedestrian exercise and lust. I am re-reading the Reisebilder in French and find parts of it

tiresome for the first time in my life. It seems to be impossible to admire a book permanently.

The Academy cheque will doubtless arrive in a day or two when I will write to you again. If you see Levy jog his memory about the poems.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

What about Mrs. Blieck's boot-cleaning stuff? Did you lose the pattern?

. . . .

The "Maeterlinckian thing" was *The District Visitor*, a one-act play published in the *English Review* after its author's death, played at the Court Theatre in 1915, and since pirated in book form in America.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably May, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for your letter. As you see the worst has not happened for the cheque arrived this morning. It seems that one of the proprietors was away from England so they had to wait for him to come back. It isn't large because as you remember I was left out one week, but this month's ought to be better, if I am in next Saturday's issue. Naturally I am feeling more cheerful, as the E.R. should come to the rescue at the end of May with a cheque for my poem.

I don't know whether it is much more expensive to telegraph money than to send it by mandat de poste. If it is, the latter will do, as Madame can wait a couple of days and Max will not dun me. The Academy are sending me two more books to review at length, so the future is comparatively bright.

This is merely a hasty line to send with the cheque. I will write a letter tonight.

Yours for art

RICHARD.

. . . .

Extraordinary how the problem of mere living occupies the minds of those of us who write! The wonder is that anything gets done at all!

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably May, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

——"But although the subject and the author are obscure, the poem is rather exceptional. It is held in a suspension of music and reverie, and has an outline in vagueness that is flung out to be apprehended, not dissected."

Thus the "Literary Digest" of New York and thereafter prints Melanie from one end to the other. I don't know what it means but it tremendously impressed some Americans who are stopping here for three days. They look at me now with wide eyes as being a real poet approved by the Literary Digest. (avec telle nomme. . . .)

And yet, they might well reflect, this celebrity is sad, sad with the aromatic sadness of sandalwood, sad as a man may well be who has worked hard for a week and produced nothing. I have an aching hole in my head where my brains should be and I am good for nothing better than writing letters.

And yet an hour ago the fair Gilberte being in my room remarked inconsequently "Et maintenant je veux faire mon petit commission." I paid no attention till I heard a sound of falling waters, and turned round to see her sitting joyously on the pot de chambre. At this moment—enter Madame! Fortunately Gilberte is only four years old, and I do not think Madame suspects me of seeking obscure pleasures. Still I am sad, yes even though a French menage is breaking up with some violence the other side of the folding doors, behind your empty bed. Every now and then the lady strikes the gentleman a sounding smack in the face, and somebody is packing though I don't know which. The gentleman has just expressed the opinion that it is abominable to have to pay for one's kisses. I swallow a capsul and give him my mute support. Incidentally, Madame has sacked my perfidious lady-love though not on my account. I am glad that I shall see

those watery-blue eyes no more, especially as she calmly expressed her intention of returning to my bed as soon as I was cured ! I know that in certain moods I would have let her.

Still I am sad, though I met my flapper once more and found she had the gorgeous name Palmyre. I should liked to have loved a girl with a name like that but soberly it is impossible. She is just sixteen, much too clever, and has the coming-on disposition of an E.D. I prefer the youthful Adolphine, the child of the house, whom I discovered yesterday deep in the fifth volume of Casanova his memoirs. I was so surprised, that I told her it was not a suitable book for a little girl of fourteen. Woe is me, I half believe that it isn't.

Monday.

I have had a bad attack of the hump and have foreborne to trouble you with the history of my melancholies. Suffice it to remark that I am a very foolish fond old man and——

The work goes badly, the complaint does not go too well, I cannot walk or drink or look at girls, and the Academy cheque is late again, which worries me a great deal more than it ought to. I shall never have any material tranquility in this world, never. Today Madame asked me the second time for the rent so I sent you a wire and now I wish I hadn't. But I don't know what else there is to do. Max is impossible in some subtle way, and Leon I see but rarely. When the cheque comes, I am sick of saying to myself that it must come this week, you can repay yourself your four quid, and I shall still have quite enough to get on with. If it were not for the little Gilberte who plays sedately with me nearly every morning I should lay down and die these sweltering airless days. Me blithering here and you in England with your mess-up of a life, and I can't bring myself to believe that there is any reason for either of us.

God ! it's hot today, I can't write any more. I shall be

better tomorrow and worse the day after and so on to the grave's edge. I wrote a Coronation poem the other day, but it isn't as bad as it ought to be.

You needn't bother to answer this. Wait till I send you something more cheerful. I am angry with life now.

Yours ever

RICHARD

Yea-and-Nay !

BRUSSELS,

Friday, 18th May, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

The Academy cheque has not yet arrived but the E.R. has come to the rescue surprisingly enough as you see. £4. 4/- for Melanie and £15 for the story, which is pretty good for a young 'un. I have a suspicion that smitten by my melancholy letter you may have been playing Deus ex Arthur Machina. If so, why there you are as you might say. If not, why no, sir! (This is the monologue style. Very difficult to keep up for any length of time, believe me.) I shall be infinitely obliged if you will cut it up and apportion it as follows :—

Give £4 in specie to Henry Savage of Raynes Park with my compliments, my congratulations and my thanks.

Send £4 in postal orders or M.O. to Miss Middleton of Springfield, St. Albans, on the part of her unworthy debtor and brother. (I owes her the money and I may now tell you she is a-wanting of it).

Remit balance to Richard Middleton of Brussels per *mandat de poste*. He also, I have heard say, is a-wanting it. He will now pay a month's rent, buy some clothes, and look Max Blieck in the eye, a poet and a man.

By the same post arrived a postcard from Levy who has the great work, duly returned by Foulis. I shall wait now until F.H. swims once more into my ken. I don't know where he is at present at all. I suppose if I come to England for a fortnight at the end of June or early in July, you could put me up for a week somehow or other, and St. Albans could put me up for t'other week and I should not be ruined.

This is only a business letter.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

BRUSSELS,

Tuesday, May 23, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for the letters, and the remittance safely to hand. Your letters soften my stern features into a sad or even a wistful smile. Beautiful flappers, horses marvellously beaten by short heads, tipsy philosophies—what shall I say? I know that no word of mine can spoil the mirage of your happiness. I only wonder sometimes that repetition does not stale the glamour of your dreams, for there is a certain family likeness between them all which stamps you woefully unimaginative. It might be said coarsely that you like to return to your vomit. I think at times that if you had to spend one night every week with one of T's strong, healthy women, we should hear no more of your laboured perversities. Not that in themselves they are especially sexual, but that they spring from the starved sexuality of your nature. I don't know—only I think it's a pity you don't mix your life a little more. Even here, in the most comfortable exile I have ever known, I realise how far habits degrade the life of a man.

Personally I am in a sort of transition period. I have lost the old life without yet finding a new one. Sooner or later something will happen to me and I will stride out manfully into a new world. Meanwhile I am pretty happy now that the rent is paid and I think the work will soon go better; only the malady flourishes unabated and promises to give me some trouble. At least it keeps me away from the Boulevards——.

I shall come to England, if I can secure enough of the ready, about the third of July, and propose to stay a fortnight in that blessed country. This will enable me to see Harrison, the Academy and F.H., who will probably be back by then. Also I want to see about the poems, damn them.

I spent Sunday at Linkebeck with Leon and Emma.

I like both of them separately but neither of them together. I saw a child's funeral of which I shall make something astonishing one of these days.

I must now write to my sister, Christine, Levy and the Academy, so please forgive a short letter.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably May 24, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Your letter was very pleasant, filled with a joyous spirit of sunshine and love and contented wrong-doing that makes me recall my grievous scritch of yesterday with a blush. When I'm not well I'm something to reckon with . . . I'm better today.

Also I was depressed because of the work; lately I've been starting things and not finishing them, which is my worst symptom. Today I've started something else, a monologue on love poems which I think I will get finished. It will make you very wild, and may do for the E.R. Let's try the new ink-pot. After all, I realised that Dreams and Illusions would never do for the Academy so I'm writing something else for them instead. I shall have nothing in this week, which is a pity, but I hope the new series will start the week after. It is really a short story in five or six slices. We shall see! I also sent them my Coronation poem but it's very bad, I'm afraid.

Christine is coming on. Her last letter contained a frank declaration of love, and a confession that she preferred my kisses to the X's I put at the bottom of my letters! She goes to Vichy on Saturday for three months. I should like to have her here for a fortnight at the end of the tour, with a view to her seduction. It would be like seducing Queen Victoria, but I honestly believe it would do her a lot of good. Perhaps I had better present her in my mind as a kind of stuffy domestic ideal. But I am getting frightfully wise these days, and it irritates me. Why can't I make love in the meadows, at least when I am cured? A detail that we do not put in our novels. Christine's melting letters give me amorous thoughts and in my present state of health they are excruciatingly painful. What a glorious thing love would be if it always hurt our flesh like that. We should get even at last with women and their damned child-bearing! And that part of it means so

little to imaginative folk like you oh sportive poet, and R.M. writer of prose. I break off to annotate your letter.

A. When you see trouble arriving come over to Belgium without waiting to have a row. Rows make more trouble than anything else.

B. You needn't tell B anything about the English Review. Why bother her . . . unless you want her to read your poems.

C. I wired because I waited till the last moment for the cheque to come, like an idiot. I too am like Willie Summers.

D. The Houndsditch case was all damnable from start to finish.

E. Garland on Modern English Authors—Henry James on the Emotions of the Phoenicians.

In the early morning the streets of the city of Brussels are filled with the song of birds because there are so many trees there.

Thursday.

This morning I don't like my monologue so much but I continue it in order to get something finished. I have a drawer full of bits and pieces that are no good to anybody. I shall have been here thirteen weeks on Saturday, and really I have got a good deal of work done in the time, viz. :

Published or in course of publication.

worth				
£23	11	Academy	articles, say	14,500 words.
2. 2/-	3	„	reviews	2,500
11	1	E.R.	story	4,500
£36. 2/-				

Unpublished.

1	short story	3,500
1	Maeterlinckian sketch	2,000
2	Dreams and Illusions	2,500
		29,500

Item ! quite a lot of fragments for the book and three bad poems.

Of course it isn't really very much, but for a lazy man like R.M. and some of my articles are better than journalism. Well, I must work harder, much harder, if I mean to get anywhere. It's weeks like last week when I wrote nothing that spoil my average. Just think, if I wrote a thousand words a day for a month I should have a dozen articles by me ! I must work, work, work, in poverty, hunger and dirk.

There are no letters today to answer so I'll just pop this in the post to acknowledge the money.

Think of your work when you're not kissing, you lascivious dog. I wish I had a little girl to kiss this afternoon.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Yes by God !

. . . .

The MS. of *Dreams and Illusions* I could never find—a pity because they were very good.

The Coronation poem (*Poems & Songs*) has at any rate one memorable line. He refers to the dead in Westminster Abbey as :

"Heroes turned dreamers in a tranquil land."

BRUSSELS,

Sunday, May 28, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Your last letter caused me a mild distress. I had written preaching—it is my forte at times—against your manner of life and you replied with a vigorous but unnecessary defence of the epistolary habit. You must know that your letters are a source of pleasure to me, and if you sometimes find my moral reflections tiresome, you must interpret them as reproducing my discontent with my own manner of life. For a month now I have had a head like a rice-pudding, and have produced nothing but scraps which I have wisely left unfinished. My malady, which increases rather than diminishes, deprives me of the only remedy I know for this kind of mental staleness. I can't get drunk, I can't sleep with prostitutes, I can't go for long walks. So you may judge from that the value of my criticisms. Intellectually I am like a little dog running after his own tale, and the worst of it is, the end is not in sight. Incidentally this barrenness will probably mess up my visit to England for my next Academy cheque will be a very small one, and if I continue in my evil practices the one after will not see the light at all. But if I am cured in a week or so, it will be all right I hope. I still have a head but it is full of stodgy drivel, and I can think of no way of stirring it up. Today I rode on a tram to Quatre-Bras—where the soldiers were once—made water against a tree in the forest, and returned to Brussels as uninspired as I set forth.

Tuesday.

Not yet is the hour of my redemption, but I feel today as though, to quote Jepson, " there will be warmer girls, more good red gold ! " and perhaps tonight I shall do a little work. Letters to hand from my sister, who liked your note, and from Annie Mac who is now at Vichy. The malady goes better.

I have read Le Mâle by Camille Lemonnier which is really a masterpiece, Galsworthy's Patrician, which disappointed me beyond measure, and some plays by Bernstein, stagey but good. Galsworthy's book is like Anthony Hope *cum* Seton Merriman *cum* Henry James. That young man is finished. The Man of Property and Justice are evidently all he had in him. I saw a very silly thing of his in an American magazine the other day. *There are no great men in England today.* I am still in Belgium.

Oh la-la-la- as we say in Europe. Why can't I go home —I write this in a café—and produce a masterpiece. I know how it's done—but I do not know how to do it. My book cranks on a page or two every day—but I doubt it is but a chilly form of art I practise. I want to write bloodsome things like La Mâle, and I write pretty little things like Mattie a Waif (By the author of Owen, a Stray). Yet I honestly believe that one day I shall astonish the whole blooming boutique.

If you found " Sister Carrie "—it may be on your shelves or it may be in my box—and sent it to me it would be a gentle action. I want to lend it to Max, also I want to re-read it myself. The quid will stand for the present. I have plenty of money to go on with.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

BRUSSELS,

Wednesday, June 7, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Thanks for the letter. I am of opinion that it is good for both of us to write letters, though they vary between the discipline of the cloister and the expansion of the confessional. The purport of your last neither surprised nor shocked me. As you must know, I have a great regard for Epsom Race-course myself, and am Jesuitical enough to find it legitimate to lose money in Derby week. But I would not have backed Sunstar. I hate favourites.

In my last letter from Christine—we are quite epistolary love-birds these days—I learn that Lily Randall has married the immortal Micky Doolan. What do you think of that for a piece of news? I feel as though I was sorry—she's only eighteen and deserved a better fate than baby-breeding like her admirable mother.

Saturday.

And there my letter stopped—I don't know why. And now there's another very interesting one from you, with some questions to answer. The Academy sent me a proof of the letters and I have forwarded a reply which will doubtless appear next week. The publisher-man is certainly a swine; I have dealt with him faithfully. Please do not doubt your sanity because you can't understand my latest article. There's nothing subtle in it at all. It's meant to be taken as it stands, as a plain statement of the birth of an average modern novel-writer. No allegory, no satire. It is stained however by three abominable misprints. If I'm ironical it's with circumstance and not with my creation. That is not so true of No. 2 which is nearer farce. The Randall person certainly wants kicking; for one wild moment I nearly wrote to the New Age myself. But I've got other fish to fry in this world.

The Margery scandal is humourous and contrasts oddly

with my tranquil life. We were all quite excited the other day when Gilberte proposed to *raser* her *tetins*. But we are simple folk here. I glance amorously at Adolphine and she is unmistakeably curious, but mama is a scorcher and I shall try to leave well alone. Hence a poem, of which you may have two lines :

> Ah heart to what dischantment am I brought
> By all the evil that I have not wrought !

Quite like old times, isn't it ? It's a good idea of you and B coming over in July. I shall come to England on Monday, July 3 I think, or Sunday the 2nd, and shall stop a fortnight or so. Perhaps we could come back here together. Leon talks of going to Germany for a week's holiday next Sunday, and I may go with him in search of impressions, which have been rather scarce lately. The malady is much better, though I'm not yet cured. Max continues very friendly and both he and Leon ask constantly after you and want to know when you are coming over.

I write this at two o'clock in the morning in shame of my remissness. I will try to write you a better letter soon.

Good luck to the Vita Nuova !

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

The letters related to the Belgian Poets book which he had reviewed. The review started a controversy.

BRUSSELS,

Friday, June 9, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for the letter and the book. The latter I had already read in a bad and abbreviated French translation, but that only made me more eager to read it at length. It's certainly an extraordinary book though to me the character of the hero is so intensely irritating that I can hardly judge it dispassionately, as a work of art should be judged. Like you I had plumped for Svidrigailoff; he seems to me to be the only *live* character in it. All the rest are intellectual propositions. Gorky is certainly the greater artist, though possibly he writes on a lower plane. I have another little thing of Dosty's that's rather good; written too with the gas turned low. I'll bring it over with me. Next Wednesday I probably go with Leon to Montjoie in Germany for a week. I shall come over on Monday July 3rd and stop till the following Saturday week if all goes well. Yesterday I had my hair cut and was measured for a new suit. These are days of high endeavour!

Your letter in the Academy made me smile. Why don't you give Forel's book to M, you dog? You know it would interest her. It's possible to say that a book is not suitable for infants without confusing art and morality, oh unmoralist. Really, at bottom in some negative way it's you who confuse them. The Professor understood my little paragraph; I take off my hat to him. My poems are not smutty enough for that scoundrel of a publisher, who would want paying anyhow. By the way I am going to ask Levy to send them to you as I want to revise them when I come over. I have had a long letter from Jepson who says nothing charmingly, and two bills from Jones and Evans, who suspect me of making money. Well, by the time I land in England with a return ticket, I shall be nearly busted so they haven't much of a chance. I like the sea-side idea but finance presents insuperable difficulties for us both, and I don't quite believe in that mythical

winner of yours. Every gambler must have coined the aphorism that you never win money when you really want it. This leads me to suspect that there is a God.

I have a good poem half written on young Adolphine, whom fear makes uncommonly attractive. Last night Madame was ill and they all went to bed early, so Adolphine had to come out in her nightdress to show me the downstairs lavatory. I was never nearer rape in my life. I sweat now when I think of it. There's a devil in me I can hardly control at times. But she's only just fourteen and three quarters innocent I believe, so I am afraid. I wish I could kill my passions. Christine is at Vichy with Addie Wells; I wish she was here, not because I love her, but because I am used to her.

Phil Ray has his points, though they are mostly bad points, but I'm sure that I should not like Malcolm Scott. I suppose you will get the number of the Spectator to which Cowper refers this week. The editorial note about Winston Churchill is frankly libellous. Perhaps that young man will take steps.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

c/o Fraulein Berta Mathar,
Stadstrasse 3,
Montjoie, Germany,
Friday, June 22, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Here I am with an enragé architect named Bochoms who needs looking after when the rain prevents him from making sketches. It certainly is an extraordinary place; all the houses are three hundred years old, there is a river curling in and out that is really one long waterfall, "and all about these tower the mighty hills," which are in fact mountains known as the Ardennes. If you add to this that we eat too much four times a day and that the weather is determinedly damp you will have a good conception of the general scenery of Montjoie. In 1860 there were over 3000 inhabitants; today there are under 1700, so one is not bothered with signs of progress, which is a good thing. There are forests and ruined castles at Montjoie and the streets are full of kittens.

Saturday.

Last night being St. John's Eve the young men nailed green branches on the doors of all the pretty girls—I mean the doors of their houses. I have bought a pipe like a surgical section. I have climbed the high mountains and found them full of black and brown slugs. The black slugs are longer than the brown ones but they are not so fat. This is a very religious place. There are four or five churches, and a few minutes ago I saw a little girl scratching herself with the corner of a prayer-book, where nice little girls do not scratch at all. Honour be to him who evil thinks.

Half the houses are falling into the river; the other half are climbing out of it with fishes and water weed among their slaty roofs. The river, as I have finely remarked, spends all its time turning in its bed, as if it were looking

for a hair-pin. I make mot justes and very little else these days, which perhaps is good for the journalist's soul. I have not much faith in minds that carry their cargo each run. To lie in the rain and laugh at Leon's diminutive (very) artistic soul is more literary than writing disillusioned articles for the Academy. I am now quite cured so I shall come to England fit for heroic deeds. Unhappily the money is a bit short, so if it will not bankrupt you, I think it would be good to bung that quid in the shape of a postal order to Richard Middleton at Brussels, as it would be sad if that young man of talent had to travel steerage. The other night, to celebrate his recovery he spent twenty francs on profligacy and enjoyed it very much. I am afraid he will come to a bad end.

Well, I'm looking forward to seeing you again and hearing all the things that elude our letters. This one must be short, for Leon who encloses an illegible page is raging round the room, preparatory to going out.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

A very good essay on Montjoie appears in *Monologues*.

HOTEL DE LA COURONNE,
HEYST S/MER,
Dimanche, 30.7.1911.

Your letter arrived surprisingly this morning and I note its contents. I have explained my hard case in the accompanying letter. What would Jesus do?

I am glad to hear you are coming on the eighth. I will certainly stop on as the bathing is delightful and the atmosphere pleasing, but the holiday will be followed by the bankruptcy of a young poet. Well, Madame will give me credit now!

I think you will find me better company than I was in England. I am idling here with a splendid steadiness of purpose; and enjoying it very much. Today however I must write an article of some sort.

I feel genuinely sorry about Beatrice. Ugly girls are always so proud of their lovers, and she is a good girl as they go. Perhaps she will marry him when he comes out.

Shall I book a room for you? They are distinctly scarce in August.

RICHARD.

. . . .

"The accompanying letter," I have lost. It told of his seduction by his Brussels landlady, and of how, satiated, he had fled to Heyst.

Beatrice was a housemaid, whose lover, a postman, had been sent to prison for embezzlement.

HEYST S/MER,

August 1, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

I was very glad to get your letter, and to learn that there is a prospect of an invasion of Heyst by a British contingent. At present we are mostly Germans and my life though agreeable is solitary. The hotel question has had my consideration and gives rise to the following remarks.

1. Don't talk rot about the old lady being Raynes-Parkish.

2. Hotel de la Couronne was chosen by me as being cheap i.e. for Heyst which is expensive. My bill works out at about £2. 10/- a week.

3. Nevertheless I am of opinion that the old lady would be happier in a tonier hotel, because she would thereby avoid the intolerable weariness of the table d'hote.

Where there is never quite enough to eat so that if someone takes two pieces of meat the commissariat is disordered, and the whole table—30 persons—waits while a steak is cooked for the odd man out. This has happened twice !

Where the meals last over an hour, of which personally I spend fifty five minutes in watching women feeding their little boys with pieces of meat.

Where one has to be punctual.

Where there is no choice of food.

4. At a decent hotel you can do what you like if you can afford to pay for it.

5. I would suggest that I should book a room or rooms for your mother and sister at a toney hotel facing the sea and that you and Howell should suffer here with me. Or, if it is necessary that you should stay with your mother, that I should book rooms for the crowd of you at a t. hotel.

It is noble of me to abuse this hotel because I know nobody to talk to at the table d'hote and am consumedly bored twice daily. They are a bourgeois crowd and eye each other's plates rapaciously.

If you decide on the TONEY hotel please say when you are coming, how long you think of stopping (a week, or two ?) and whether expense is any object, also how many rooms you would want. If you decide to stop at the Couronne I shall be delighted, and free from responsibility. This is a devilishly business-like letter in answer to yours which was amusing. Please understand that I was practically raped. This morning I have two letters, one from Adolphine and one from mama. Adolphine is gay, mama speaks of her tristesse, damn her. The solution of the problem eludes me. My sister writes to say that my eldest brother has a daughter (father unknown). That's my comment, not my sister's ; that things are looking up with the family finances and that my mother set her bed on fire.

Now whatever you do, mind and come. I shall be really glad to see your sister again !

Yours ever

RICHARD

off to bathe.

SPRINGFIELD,

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably Sept., '11.

DEAR HENRY,

A certain doubt as to your temporary abiding-place and a strict attention to my business as journalist have prevented me from writing to you before. What is news? said Pilate and would not wait for his "Answers." I am no better instructed.

Christine writes to say that she is going to spend three months in Brussels with her troupe this winter. Madame writes that her children miss me very much. "You know," she adds subtly, "they regard you as a father." Selwyn Jepson writes that it is raining at Dymchurch. Jules writes about a strange cat whom he has met in the course of his holidays. These are my letters. Oh and Henry Savage writes that he is turning over a new leaf. I hope it is true, for it must be confessed that the old one was mightily scrawled upon.

With a view to uninterrupted work I have not yet told Harris of my presence in England. I suppose you heard that I had met the R. contingent on the Great North Road. It was a shock, also an awkward five minutes as they very unnecessarily pulled up.

On Monday I go to town per cheap train to see the Academy folk and have my hair cut. In the afternoon I propose, I don't know why, to go to the swimming baths. Perhaps I shall ring you up in case you also feel like a swim.

There are flappers here equal to anything I have seen in my travels, but in this part of the world the sport is dangerous. Also, by the way, I am sick of love, preferring apples and flagons.

The sad fate of Mrs. Lisa [the theft of La Joconde] had not escaped my notice; indeed I had kept a cutting for you which I enclose. I back the American scientist who

points out that the famous smirk is a grimace due to advanced consumption.

I have reviewed Stevenson with anguish and sweat. I have written an article touching Heyst among other things, but though I took a frightful amount of trouble over it, it doesn't altogether come off.

Presently I shall do the joyous easy things !

Yours ever

RICHARD.

ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably early Sept., '11.

DEAR HARRY,

Many thanks for your letter. Cling to your illusions and they will pull you through. Jones & Evans write to me care of the English Review for their money. If this is Wilson, it's subtle of him for he has my private address. I have written to them with promises. They have really treated me very well though God knows how I shall pay them.

There is a French book called Marie-Claire ; it's a wonder though suitable for the jeune fille.

It was not Bobby Ross in the Morning Post it seems but a new young literary editor. Harrison met him somewhere and told him off about it. Apparently he had nothing to say in his defence. I shall be in town to-morrow morning on business and I go to Jepson's on Sunday night. I shall ring you up tomorrow but I suppose you can't get up on Saturday. Harris tells me the Russian pictures showing somewhere in town are really wonderful.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Forgive scrawl. It's my seventh letter this morning !

AT THE SIGN OF THE INEFFECTIVE
JOURNALIST, OVER AGAINST ST. ALBANS,

No date. Probably Sept., '11.

DEAR HENRY OF THE POPPIES,

I owe you seven letters, three postcards and a newspaper cutting, the latter concerning life. These are debts that a softening of the brain due to sterile effort (for guineas not for fame) will not permit me to pay. But here is a piece of paper with words on it. From certain points of view you might—if charitably disposed—take it for a letter. Yes indeed, indeed! A letter. To that end I will disguise it in a real envelope adorned with your name and address and a caricature of the King, God bless him. May it fare well and meet with a decent reception at its journey's end. Poor thing, poor thing, poor thing; but mine own. Dagont!

Our excursion the other day had a flavour not solely of alcohol; especially the inn in the Borough that smacked of the hayseed. Gaffer Garge Wilson, why not Bilson affectionately? nipped your errant elbow in his best style. He satisfies that part of me that expects too much of men—I'm not sure that he satisfies any other part of me—but that's sufficient. He knows how to make life, and not the mere expression of life, really funny. God bless him!

X X X X X (Interlude with a savage kitten who likes playing with dynamic pen-holders).

On Wednesday I lunch with the immortal Frank, who is finishing another book on Shakespeare (called, I believe, but it's private, the Woman Shakespeare!). On Thursday I shall likely seek the Bohemians in search of inspiration. The quiet life, though pleasant for the fleshly individual is hell for the imaginative artist. Can't see; deprived of light o' day! Some mad young men would do me good at present.

It's fairly certain that I shall not go back to Brussels till the beginning of October. Then for the masterpieces damn my eyes. Is Richard Middleton played out? No,

by thunder! Then why does the kitten spit on this my letter? Answer me that Herr Savage.

Monday.

Another blue day busted idle away; and Sister Carrie for which blessed minx I thank you. My mind continues to soften. I thread beads on strings and admire my own handiwork. The sea hath its pearls and R.M. threads beads like stars. 'Tis a work that charms, that stealeth over the spirit of decayed poets. I have beads as big as O and as small as . ! Rubies and male-sapphires and trebizonds as large as bowler-hats. Speak me kindly and I will make thee an eloquent necklace or a bracelet perilously remote. Beads!

How goes the book? I hope it fares better with you than it does with me. Every page done is an argument in favour of our existence. Proceed, continue, and afterwards go on. I am not the first saint excluded from the heavenly Marathon.

No, I will babble no more. Let us be optimists, writers of books, pleasant fellows. Even the weariest sea climbs some way up the river. The water of the Thames, I have heard, is noticeably salt at London Bridge.

And, till Phillipi unites us, I am,

Yours ever

RICHARD.

A Teller of Beads.

Design for a necklace. Original. Richard Middleton (Aged 3½).

AT THE SIGN OF THE
CRIMSON PIG OR THE IDLE POET
(ST. ALBANS),

No date. Probably Sept., '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Your expression of pessimism has been read and filed for reference by a bright boy who is not, at the moment, a pessimist, although he has done no tangible work for a week. Last night he took the chair at the N.B's and being moved by alcohol shouted lustily at a distinguished company for three hours. Everyone was there, including Machen, Jepson, Charlton, Levy, Allnut, George Wilson, Christopher ditto, McQuilland, Henderson, Pope, Titterton, Gibson, two or three new lads, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all. It was, I believe and trust, a good evening. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I knew you wouldn't come after King William's debacle. In the afternoon I went to the gallery at the Follies.

Methuen is to publish Frankie's new Shakespeare book this Christmas. F. is in good form and has been working hard to find a publisher for the poems. He seems confident of success in that onerous venture. Well, well, it would have given me more pleasure two years ago.

No, I'm not a pessimist though I have a headache today. Pessimism is a disease of the liver. When you feel like that you ought to go for a six miles walk on the Common. Next day your mind would return to work. Verb sap.

Sunday night I sup at Jepson's ; I shall probably come up to town the following Thursday, though as my parents are going away for a fortnight, I shall be on duty here more or less. I want to do a lot of work and spend no money ; these are my desires. My Heyst article was nearly damned good and in effect was damned bad. But I sweated over it a bit. This next week I am on safer and less ambitious ground. To say the truth, I am a rotten journalist.

Saturday.

Dear, oh dear! Boy Bertrand [who had just died] was in the right of it, but we who have not his chance must endure our staying here even as our coming hither. I find Sister Carrie too utterly depressing. I will read it no more. I must read the joyous humbugging books that aid the illusion of happiness, the books where lovers and dreamers inherit fortunes at the right hour.

Sunday.

"Neath the tears of night the tired earth recovers,
Spent with the anguish and passion of the sun,
Earth has no secrets, no secrets for her lovers,
Their ways are her ways and all hearts are one."

Thus the Penny Whistler. But this melody is not for all ears. Taste this:

"I cannot live, I cannot live without you,
Nor these my pains, nor these my pains endure,
And yet to die, beloved, were to flout you,
Take me! Break me! And trouble me no more."

No? Well, listen:

"Too long this vain endeavour
Desire's bonds to sever,
Oh loose your charms into my arms
And finish me for ever.

Your blood now flees, now rallies,
Now leads adventurous sallies,
Its rhythm fills your shapely hills
And moves your secret vallies.

Oh sweet to be so near you,
To see you and to hear you;
To open wide the gates of pride
And never more to fear you!"

Still shaking your head? Well, I've broken my pipe.

RICHARD.

St. Albans,

Sept. 29, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

You mustn't be cross about last night. "The acts of a genius," says Heine, "like those of a drunkard lie outside all reckoning." If you question my genius, you cannot deny me the drunkard's portion of irresponsibility, so there you are. I have a terrible head and a worse mouth today, and coin no pretty phrases. I lie on the sofa and read Claudine, which has points.

If I do not hear from you to the contrary, I will turn up some time tomorrow night. I shan't go to the dinner in the Borough, I think.

Yours ever

Vinous Richard.

ST. ALBANS,

Oct. 6, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

If I do not receive two telegrams to the contrary I shall descend on you some time tomorrow night, probably early rather than late. On Sunday night, as you know, I am booked for Jepson—I think I will stay Monday in order to see Holbrook Jackson and possibly Frank. Monday night we might spend together over the port and walnuts, my last night on British soil. And then Tuesday, hey for the Continong !

Do you agree ? Well, I shall ring you up when I reach town tomorrow night, say at 6.30 pm.

Hoorooh !

Yours

SILAS TAYLOR COMBERBACH.

10 Rue de Joncker,

Brussels,

No date. Probably early October, '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Many thanks for the P.O. which was welcome as I arrived here with three francs in my pocket and one of those was a bad one. I am back in the old room and feel as though I had never been away at all. The girls are here. . . . I saw Addie at what they call a concert aperitif yesterday but I had no chance to speak to her. She was looking extremely pretty I thought. Christine I haven't seen yet, and I shall not if I can help it before the Academy cheque arrives. In this, of course, I wrong her !

I am going to try and write some good short stories between now and Christmas, for I believe that that way lies the lazy kind of prosperity that I desire. Within the last twelve months I have received a hundred and nine pounds for the sweat of my brow. Next year it must be two hundred and will be I think. These are my literary ambitions !

This paper is called Hieratica and costs a shilling a block. It's worth the extra money because it has such a lovely surface. (Advt.) You ought to try it.

I have a headache this morning and can find no epigrams with which to adorn this scrawl.

Yours ever

Richard.

BRUXELLES,
Tuesday, Oct. 24, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Thank you for your cheerful letters; I am sorry that I cannot reply in the same blythe key. My body is devoured by mosquitoes and my heart is gnawed by rats. There is a damned Frenchman in the house who kisses Adolphine. Addie gets off with tall young bounders from England. Christine alone is faithful (pace a certain Swiss boy) and she bores me to tears. I have done no work since I have been here, 'tis a fortnight today, but I have just started a short story that may bring me somewhere. I am doing my best to quarrel with the Academy because they haven't been putting in my articles, and I don't intend to send them anything more. The English Review relieved Mafeking by sending me eighteen guineas for my stories. When I wrote and grumbled Harrison bunged me another tenner with a charming note, so you see, like you and Charlton, I have had the wherewithal to bust. Well, I've spent some of it carousing mildly and it gives me no satisfaction. Toothache and a bad attack of nerves complete the tale of my woes.

Having turned the page I must aim at a nobler mark though Lord knows my disillusionment is not complete enough to be desirable. I am like the lady in the song, "j'aurais mieux fait de rester tranquille," and rush out on to the landing to catch the Frenchman, who isn't a bad sort, paddling in her neck with his damned fingers. How does one kill desire? My heart, when he's not there she comes to me, and is manifestly astonished at my roughness. How can I smile at her when she likes him better than me—bitch—and she's not. She's just a little girl with an inquiring mind and I am a kind of frustrated Willoughby. "J'aurais mieux fait——"

I like your quotation from the Elizabethans and don't give a damn for Maurice Baring's ballade. I have some cuttings but I can't spare them: the father who accidentally drove over his little boy and cut his head off, and then ran across the country with the headless body in his

arms. (Do you remember the boy and the dog on Wimbledon Hill?) Then the nineteen year old husband who pulled out a revolver and threatened to shoot his sixteen year old wife because the soup wasn't hot. The wife told him he hadn't got the pluck, so he fired and his wife fell fainting on the floor. He then blew his brains out, and his wife, who was really unhurt, was with difficulty prevented from following his example when she came to. Then the madman who was arrested for violating graves and explained that he was called from every corner of the earth by those who had been buried alive. All these things happened in France where things happen. I have others and a fine short story out of Le Journal; you ought to take it in.

Wednesday.

This morning my story The Ghost Ship returned by the London Magazine which is a nasty smack in the eye as I thought they were going to take it. The Academy preserves a dignified silence and does not answer my letters. What did Wilfred Randall say about my stories in the E.R.? It was in the number for Oct. 14th, which I have not seen. Oh what the hell do all these things matter.

Blieck I have seen once and will see again on Friday. He is bothered by his family, but glad to see me, I think. The Bochoms of course I have not seen. It is a pity I don't know any decent people here; all the English people I have spotted have been impossible.

If the horses continue to be successful why shouldn't you and Charlton go to Paris for a week (Polaire is there now) and I will come and join you there? Only make up your minds before I bust my money. Personally I have the hump as you may have detected in this letter and I should like a little holiday.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

Lord luv 'im.

My motter:

"J'aurais mieux fait de rester tranquille."

Your motter:

"Fetch aft the rum, Darby!"

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably Oct., '11.

DEAR 'ENERY,

As life colours art, so creme de menthe mixed with hot milk maketh the hand of the correspondent to tremble in the mornings. Never mind. One day I shall discover a drink. Naturally, I have no news. I have been eaten by mosquitoes (when I was a little boy we used to call them gnats). I have had some toothache, I have pleaded a nervous breakdown to preserve a libidinous old woman from the worst of affronts, I have not written two coherent words since my return. Adolphine I begin to dislike, but so far only in moments. You see, she is cunning and that is bad in a young person.

Christine won't do at any price. Much dancing has made her thin, and she prates coquettishly of a certain Swiss boy, but the poor girl cannot hide her vexation when I make eyes at Addie grown very pretty. They are amusing for an hour, but two days of Christine would make me sane.

Last night a woman said to me, "You are a real philosopher, you are a philosopher in your soul," which is a good idea, though not flattering from a woman. I have been reading George Moore's Confessions which should be entitled the audacities of a commonplace mind. He is a man who cheapens the immortal with his praise and flatters the negligible with his censure. Max has been in Holland and I see him for the first time tomorrow. Leon I have not sought after.

Fisher Unwin wrote me a letter about the stories in the English Review, saying that of course they were not the makings of a book but that perhaps I had something else by me he could publish. What an imbecile! But I wrote him a civil letter with an eye on potential cakes and ale.

Nothing happens but perhaps tomorrow I shall be singing a great song.

Yours ever

RICHARD

BRUSSELS,

Sunday, Nov. 5th.

Guy Fawkes Day

The Dawn of the 47th Vita Nuova.

DEAR HENRY,

Thank you for a letter that gave me one great laugh, and a measure of sympathetic understanding of the mood in which you wrote it. I know that it is to find both Cynara and Cleopatra tedious. That is the hour when work should begin, for lack of a better dream. The idea of you and Charlton running the Morning Advertiser delights me like all mad fancies. Such things ought to be possible. . . . And there is something to be said for the world in which such things are conceivable, albeit the idea presents itself for my admiration adorned with a crown of vine leaves. Oh gay wise blythe young men! God give you courage to face the day after the dream.

I myself am so much in the deeps that I grow more hopeful—this is no paradox but a plain statement of my attitude towards existence. Tomorrow I shall have been here four weeks, four weeks of drunkenness and riggishness and unbroken idleness. During the whole of that period I have been distinctly ill and very unhappy. I have no nerves left and my stomach is completely disordered, "more like a whore's than a man's." And it was not till eleven o'clock last night that my spirit was enlightened as to the cause of my sorrows. At that hour I put my hand in my pocket and found with a delicate astonishment that I had three francs left out of something over forty pounds I have received since I've been here. "Drink and the devil had done for the rest." And forthwith the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre and Richard M rose again from the dead. I spent two of the francs on a book and walked home feeling light-hearted for the first time since I've been here. Poverty is my mother and my sister and my brother; prosperity the most evil of all my dreams. I can't stand the bitch. She makes me an eater of ordures, a lover of strabysmic worms. I have lost four weeks of my life and now I am going back to work.

Do you remember the end of my "New Boy" where he realised that all his life he would be uprooted and flung back and so would find no peace? It's awful true of my life. Up and down, up and down. Only when I seem to be going up I am falling, and when I seem to fall, I climb into my kingdom of heaven. It is only in denying my flesh that I win any battles, and as I am not naturally ascetic the denial must be compulsory. So don't send me any money to prolong the debauch. If washing-bills threaten, Max will lend me twenty francs with only a trifling elevation of the eyebrows. The sheer monotony of penury is a spur to work.

The girls Addie and Christine, who probably move on in a week's time, I shall see no more. They will think me unkind, but I have realised that the truest kindness I can do them is to let them go their way. I am no man for women, least of all for two such decent little things, for whom the whole of the darker side of human nature is an unfathomed mystery. I live in an emotional world, which, if they are fortunate, they will never even hear of. They are good girls, and goodness is a kind of ignorance, I think.

I am still rather ill, but doubtless high thinking will make me well in a day or two. I am in for a very rough time and Madame will continue to be a nuisance, but my bloated and over-crammed soul will be the better for the whip. Meanwhile I shall be glad to hear of the further progress of you and the enamelled Charlton; it seems to me that you have both recovered your lost youth which you never had.

I have met an American fiddler here whom you would love. He tells stories of his amours like Frank Harris's, only with a blend of smut and sentiment that strikes me dumb. A queer company of us sat down in an underground kitchen and talked politics and women for hours. This new society will help me to endure my punishment perhaps.

Yours ever

RICHARD
Man of Letters.

BRUSSELS,

No date. Probably early Nov., '11.

DEAR HENRY,

Was my last letter a yell for money? It wasn't intended to be. I think I lack it more than I need it, at least I hope such a philosophy is within my reach. But it was kind of you to wire me a quid and no doubt I shall be the happier for it. But I wish you would wire me a new soul. How eagerly I would rush to the post-office and over-rule their absurd demands for papers of identity. "Dear God," I would cry, "can't you see that in all Brussels there is no one who needs it so much as I." Alas! no. One is the allowance and if we mislay it, we must go hunt for it again. Shall I say to Christine or Adolphine or Max or my mad American, "Oh please have you seen my soul? I had it a while ago and now I have it not!"—I cannot think or write or even pray. Only I grow a little warmer towards men and women in general, now that I am no longer clever. I should say that I am quite a tolerable fellow these days. Louis J. McQuilland would like me, I believe.

The reason I write you these long drivels is because I can't do anything else, and it comforts me to keep writing. You will know what I mean, because you have been there yourself. You needn't answer 'em. The weather is a little warmer and I'm glad because I hate the cold. Nowadays it seems to go deeper than the flesh with me, and I feel as if my spirit had been sitting in a draught. I am thinking of going to church next Sunday night to see whether evening services have anything of the old charm. No, I am not going over to Rome or even to England. I believe nothing. That is, I can't accept any of the inventions of our ancestors. When I feel the need I shall create God for myself, and I certainly shall not make him in my own image. That is a very primitive idea, isn't it? Perhaps he is a force like electricity or a rare chemical like radium. Perhaps the Christians are right and he really is a bit like your father-in-law. Anyhow, it's only guesswork, and we moderns are precisians though I can't spell it.

T's wedding was news to me. Humanly speaking he's mad, but spiritually he's dead right to follow his star when he sees it. I would change with him tonight or Frank [Harris] for they are both the servants of illusion, and intellectual liberty, the kind I have, is not to be borne. I would give all my poems for a good dream or two. What's become of them all? I see things so clearly now, and they are black as soot. My chief pleasure is walking, and looking at people's faces. It's wonderful what a lot of nice faces there are to be seen. I suppose my real mistake has been cutting myself off so from life and human companionship. I don't mean in coming to Brussels but in rejecting all the conventions of my kind, and not making ten thousand acquaintances. But like Alfred [Douglas] I would not suffer fools gladly and nothing leads quicker to loneliness than that kind of intolerance. Of course the craving for the society of others is born of the dread of one's own company.

Friday morning.

And now here's your letter inviting me over to England and I don't quite know what to say. You see, what I lack at present is the will to work and perhaps a little the will to struggle with or to obey Destiny, i.e. the will to live. For the moment I have lost faith in myself and it appears that that was all the faith I had. I must get it back or go under wherever I am. So I think I had better hang on here another month and see how things go. Perhaps I stood in need of a spiritual purge . . . I am having it.

As for the money, now that the girls are going, I am not likely to be embarrassed by the lack of it. Max will keep me in tobacco, and Madame must wait for the rest. I shall turn to you only if she becomes anxious, which isn't very probable, for my recent abundance has left me with a faint golden halo, as one who rides freely in taxi-cabs and misses all his meals. Some time or other I will have a cheque for six or seven pounds from the Academy so that sooner or later I can square things up for the month. The

crash will come after that when I shall have nothing to look forward to, but a month's a month.

I'm sorry to trouble your Arcadia (?) with such cheerless letters but I grow very old and tired, and I don't think I shall go dancing with the children any more. And you? I always have the fancy that you are about three years younger than I am while as a fact of course you are older. But you seem to be continually renewing your youth while I decay. Oh fortunate young man, what is your secret?

Yours ever

EMMANUEL BURDEN.

BRUXELLES,

Wednesday night, Nov. 15, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

Thank you for your letter which was a good one. I liked Ellis's poem [Vivian Locke Ellis] though after all I wish he would tidy up his metres. You are quite right to dance in the sun while it lasts; that is the only philosophy for a rational hedonist. "No Arcadia is ever wholly lost" I wrote in the hours of my pride and I believe it still. But mine has suffered a sea-change and I can no longer recognize it as being an Arcadia. I am busy seeing my life in perspective and I don't like it; the moments may have sometimes been good, but the years are so many crimes. I have waited too much and acted too little. I have not the pluck to start work when I think how little I have done. But this is no new mood, it is only a recurrence, and it seems to be a part of the mockery of life that our very moments of despair are only echoes of other moments that have gone before and that we have almost forgotten. When I think of these things I do not wish that I were dead: I wish that I had never lived.

I, I, I, sixteen times says the arithmetician. Indeed, it is not hard to put a name to my disease, but one man is an egoist just as another is a negro, and the Ethiopian changes his skin more easily than the egoist gets rid of his heavy bundle of eggs. We shall continue our cackling till the day of judgment. But it is in revulsion? from, against this task that I have lately developed the Dickensian sentimentality that you refer to in your letter. I feel drawn to young children, and girls like Annie and Addie who are simple and kindly and not too clever. They give me a glimpse of the life that I have missed in my passionate search for enjoyment. Incidentally, they leave Brussels early tomorrow morning for Bordeaux. To avoid embarrassments I wrote to them two days ago to say I was called away on business, and how sorry I was not to be able to say goodbye. I feel intuitively that I shall never see

them again, but in my letter I said I would come to Bordeaux. I suppose it is a mean kind of vanity that dictates such lies, but it is none the less certain that the truth would hurt them more. And if I started telling them the truth now it would only be vanity over again. Anyhow I follow the line of least resistance. And now they have gone out of my life and taken nearly everything that blesses me and makes me sad with them. It is strange how my sorrows have always been more creditable than my joys. And now I will not or perhaps cannot move my little finger to rise above the mud that chokes me. Poor Christine had better marry her Swiss boy.

You mustn't think I afflict all humanity with these sombre visions. You are the only person to whom I write. I have left letters unanswered from Frank, Jepson, my sister . . . because they all expect me to be cheerful and I have not the energy to send them fictions. To the folk about me I turn a cheerful countenance, although I feel like a man who is laughing in the mouth of a well. They are shadows, and sometimes I could murder a few of them for believing that I am a shadow too. God Almighty, they talked of socialism today at lunch, till I broke out and told them that it was the dirtiest and meanest creed that man had hit on ; as they were all defending it they thought I was rude. Yet what is it but a crawling scheme to outwit Darwinism and the survival of the fittest ? I ought to feel compassion for these affronted ghosts, but they drive me to arrogance just when I want to feel humble. Madmen all.

I met Leon the other day. He had a tale to tell about the family and its pained surprise that your mother had not written to it from Heyst, but I asked him to distinguish between love and wounded vanity, and succeeded in puzzling his eloquence. He has moved but I have not been to his new house yet—I don't want to go but I suppose my new philosophy of loving humanity imperfect though it is at present, will ultimately bring me to the sacrifice.

As for England, I don't know what to say. I daren't look a day ahead for everything seems absolutely hopeless

unless I can get back to work. I have a story in my head called The Flapper for Austin Harrison—it's about Lily Randall—but when shall I be able to write it? And what shall I do meanwhile if I can't get back the trick of writing articles. The Noise of Life isn't it? [An allusion to De Musset's phrase.] When the Academy sends their cheque I can struggle on somehow to the tenth of next month, if nothing terrible happens in the meanwhile. After that all is a blank like the mind of

Yours ever

SILAS TAYLOR COMBERBATCH.

Thursday morning.

Postscript. I don't like this letter in the critical light of a moist November morning but I shall let it go, while asking you to read only the words I have not written, an easy task. At this moment the girls are in the train, going South with their little baskets. You are eating your breakfast and B is a little late for business this morning. My sister is riding round to the vicarage to lend the vicar's wife a piece of music. Frank is dictating masterpieces in a large voice from his bed, and R.M. is writing letters. This is real life, my boy, and Shakespeare and Keats and John Davidson are dead and don't count. I think people in general are quite mad.

At this moment arrive a farewell letter from Christine and a remarkable letter from M. writing it seems at your suggestion. She is certainly developing character, and in a year or two will be driving poor young fellers who have done no harm out of their minds. Meanwhile she is a wise child and lightly draws her breath, e.g. "I suppose you know Boy Bertrand is dead. It is rather sad don't you think? and Melanie now swanks about her town life [Melanie was Boy's brother]. I shan't give you her address so you won't be able to write."

Boy's epitaph.

But it is a very good letter.

Yours ever

DICKIE.

"I think Mr. Middleton sounds so stiff so I called you Dickie when we correspond."

BRUXELLES,

Monday morning, Nov. 20, 1911.

DEAR HENRY,

In the last three days I have written two articles. The Wet Day and The Flute-Player published in *The Day before Yesterday*. I give you the titles so that you will spot them when they come out in the Academy, and know that they were produced after a period of uncommon drouth. But I believe they are good nevertheless. Also I finished an idiot article on Belgium which will pay a washing-bill and that's all it's good for. But now I have started work again there's hope for the far future. Presently when all is well again, I shall try to do something big for the E.R. Work, work, work, in poverty, hunger and dirk. That's me. Now that I can see a star ahead you can send me a P.O. for a quid if you like; that is, if you back a winner or anything. If not, I can do without. Madame has just collared the petty cash for sundry trifles that I had forgotten. But she says she is in no hurry for the rent, which is good news. Max tells me he only draws a quid a week from the business, and his wife sits on the rest, which questionable statement I interpreted as a hint, and so I owe him nothing. I have two pounds and a quarter of Appleterre. I am a great man of letters. My next article is to be The Wool-Gatherer. Voila un titre!

And now that the flat-race season draws to an end you propose to start work. That is the kind of resolution which wakes an echo in my bosom, because it's the kind of resolution that I form myself. If I may drop a suggestion, I should try to do the Eton boys gambling at Windsor if I were you. 'Tis a good picture, and if done simply one of the Liberal dailies would take it as like as not. The Conservative papers would suspect a criticism of their glorious institutions, unless the Mail wanted to start a correspondence. Has it occurred to you that a guinea or two wrung from journalism might allay B's natural misgivings as to the future? It's only an idea of mine. We

must discuss these things seriously if I appear at Christmas. If Charlton were anything but an agreeable butterfly he would have lured you into work a long time ago. He works hard enough himself, the dog, when no one's looking.

The girls have gone and I hope I have done with love for a long, long time. The truth is that I have had a sort of nervous breakdown (? neurasthenic rag-time) and at the present moment women make me feel sick, prostitutes and elderly nymphomaniacs and the like, I mean. The plea of ill-health and a certain capacity for being rude when desperate, suffice at present to keep my bed inviolate. The story of the last month and the exhaustion that follows the effort to love Cynara, the Hottentot Venus and half a dozen Jennies at one and the same time, would make a great moral romance, if England were not such a desperately immoral country. There was a fine moment in the sorry story; when on my fourth consecutive sleepless night at an alien hotel I got out of bed and looked out of the window and saw some ducks swimming on a pond by the sad light of dawn. I felt then just the one thing about nature that Wordsworth couldn't feel because he never got far enough away from the complex bitch. I shall do some of these things yet when I find the right form.

I find an odd difficulty in writing to M which convinces me that she is not really my type. I fear that behind her surface eccentricity she is suburban and would like me better if I had new clothes and a smooth face. And yet she is engaging—there's no denying her charm. But if you and B. had not made her an extraordinary child between you, it would have been even more surprising.

I have just been pointing out to the socialists, a Bulgarian and an Armenian, that you cannot achieve liberty by suppressing other people, even if they are priests or rich men. They called me an idealist, with which triumph I was satisfied. When people tell me that England is the country of freedom I can't help feeling annoyed. Why they won't even let you wear your hair long there! The whole world is raving mad. I alone am sane, I and Ricquette [a dog, I think].

The Tragic Comedians is the only book of Meredith's that I have never been able to finish, though I confess that I have not tried it for some years. So I won't write about it because I can't. Max was enormously impressed by Sister Carrie; also by the Man of Property. I have given him the Patrician. God knows what he'll make of it. If you see the White Peacock for a shilling you might buy it for him.

Yours ever

RICHARD.

. . . .

The above was his last letter to me, except the postcard which follows. As it is a comparatively cheery letter, it is difficult to imagine exactly what happened during the next ten days. He must have had a relapse.

An odd fact is that the postcard has two dates—November 26, subsequently crossed out and the date December 1 added. It was on the latter date that he took poison. The inference is that he either made an error and corrected it at once, or actually wrote the p/c on November 26, having made up his mind, and then fought for five days before carrying out the decision. The latter hypothesis is possible owing to the fact that the December 1 date is a fainter ink than the text in general.

The postcard—print-stamped and addressed to me—was found by his bed-side and handed to me next day when I arrived in response to a telegram.

Midnight. December 1, 1911.

Goodbye! Harry.

I'm going adventuring again, and thanks to you I shall have some pleasant memories in my knapsack. As for the many bitter ones, perhaps they will not weigh so heavy now as they did before. "A broken and a contrite heart, oh Lord, thou shalt not despise."

RICHARD.

THE END

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